

S E R M O N S.

S E R M O N S

S E R M O N S

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S E R M O N S

PREACHED

IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF

ST. ALBAN, WOOD-STREET:

BY


S A M U E L H O O L E, A. M.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR GEORGE NICOL, IN THE STRAND,
BOOKSELLER TO HIS MAJESTY.

M. DCC. LXXXVI.

22 R M O N 22

THE RIGHT REVEREND

THE LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH
IN THE LANKEN CATHEDRAL
AS A SINGER, THOUGH IMPERFECT, THE

ST. ALBAN, WOODSTOCK STREET



THIS VOLUME

BY HIS LORDSHIP

SAMUEL JOHNSON A.M.
M.D.C.C.LXXV.

AND DEVOTED

LONDON

PRINTED FOR GEORGE NICOL, IN THE STRAND,
AND SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS TO HIS MAJESTY'S

M.D.C.C.LXXV.

TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
THE LORD BISHOP OF ST. ASAPH,
AS A SINCERE, THOUGH IMPERFECT, TRIBUTE
OF THE MOST PROFOUND RESPECT,
THIS VOLUME IS HUMBLY INSCRIBED,
BY HIS LORDSHIP'S
MOST OBEDIENT,
AND DEVOTED SERVANT,

Great Queen-street,
11th March 1786.

SAMUEL HOOLE.

E R R A T A.

Page. Line.

85 10 *for a, read and.*

124 the last, *for upon the sands and makes no impression,
read and makes no impression upon the
sands.*

258 15 *for those cities which rejected his doctrine,
read the village which refused to re-
ceive him.*

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NATURE OF GOD.

ON THE

S E R M O N I.

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God is a Spirit—

AS the belief of a God is the first principle of all religion, it were surely needless to repeat the unanswerable arguments which have been urged, by the philosophers and divines of every age, in support of this leading truth: To those, indeed, who declare themselves atheists, such a repetition would be necessary; but we, who have been assembled professedly for the purpose of celebrating divine worship, cannot want conviction of the existence of a Deity; since, *he that cometh to*

SERM.

I.

SERM. *God, must believe that he is**; he that addresses himself to the Supreme Being, must be convinced that such a Being exists. Can there, really, be a creature so grossly insensible, as to live in a state of perpetual dependance, yet remain ignorant of the Power on whom he depends? Is he warmed by the sun, and fed by the fruits of the earth, without perceiving that creative hand from which the sun derived its lustre, and the earth its fertility? Is he deaf to the call of reason, and the persuasion of conscience? Is he blind to the numberless productions of nature, which proclaim to every intelligent observer, "These are the works of an invisible God?" Can he raise his eyes to the spacious firmament, and, while he beholds *the moon walking in brightness*, and the heavens glowing with innumerable stars, can he forget the mighty architect, who *divided the light from the darkness, and stretched out*

* Heb. xi. 6.

On the Nature of God.

5

the heavens as a curtain?—Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things. Have ye not known? Have ye not heard? Hath it not been told you from the beginning? Have ye not understood from the foundations of the earth?*

SERM.

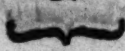
I.

Since then we can scarcely suppose, that, in an age which boasts its attainments in science, a real atheist will be found, we must rather conclude, that they who disclaim their Maker, are instigated by a most preposterous and unpardonable vanity, and think, by dissenting from received opinions, to be esteemed superior in knowledge and discernment to the rest of mankind.

Our present purpose, however, is briefly to inquire into the nature of that Being, of whose existence no doubt can be entertained by any individual of a religious assembly.

* Isaiah xl. 26. 21.

SERM.

I.


This inquiry will be found of no little importance, since our ideas of religion must be false and mean, or just and exalted, in proportion to our conceptions of that Divinity, who is the source, as well as the object, of all religion.—If the root be unsound, how can the tree flourish?—Will not its leaves wither, its branches decay, and produce no fruit at the expected season to reward the toil of the planter? But if the root be healthy, the tree will be vigorous; the sun will not warm it without effect, nor the dew of heaven water it in vain; at the appointed time it will put forth its leaves and blossoms, and bend under the weight of luxuriant abundance.

It is, therefore, highly necessary that we endeavour to fix in our minds just and proper sentiments of God; since it is certain, that if we know Him not as he is, we cannot worship Him as we ought; if the notions we form of his essence and attributes
are

On the Nature of God.

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are confined or absurd, the homage we pay Him will be unworthy of the Divine Majesty; and that zeal, which should guide us in the path of truth, will involve us still further in the mazes of error.

SERM.

I.

That part of man which is invifible and immortal, is called the *soul* or *spirit*: Those beings who are fuperior to us, and who are fupposed to be the more immediate inftruments in performing the will of the Creator, are diftinguifhed by the fame appellation;—“ *He maketh his angels fpirits* *”—and the Evangelift affures us, that God is a *Spirit*. While we are confined to this globe, and our mental perceptions are limited by the connection of the mind with the body, we conceive but very faint and indiftinct ideas of the unembodied fpirit: We can difcover nothing with certainty of the immaterial inhabitants of happier regions; we trace but imperfectly, the fa-

* Pfal. civ. 4. and Heb. i. 7.

SERM. culties even of our own souls; and can we
 I. then hope to fathom Him who fills all
 space? Who is essentially present every
 where, yet visible no where? *Whose ways
 are not as our ways, and whose thoughts are
 not as our thoughts?*

Yet, because we can discover little, shall we discover nothing? Shall we sit down in criminal ignorance, and make the weakness of human understanding an excuse for shameful and destructive indolence? Shall we, like the Samaritans, worship we know not whom?—Let us rather call upon every power that is within us to assist our researches, having this assurance to stimulate our diligence, *Ye shall find me, when ye search for me with all your heart* *.

The first thing which occurs to us, in considering the nature of a spirit, is, its opposition to corporeal substance: The body

* Jer. xxix. 13.

On the Nature of God.

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SERM.

I.

is, of itself, a dull, uninformed mass, composed of perishable matter, subject to perpetual changes, and to speedy dissolution:—

The spirit is an active, penetrating, and enlivening principle, which being immaterial, can never decay, and which is subject only to such changes, as arise from its immediate connection with the body. Our earthly tabernacle, raised from the dust, hath a constant tendency to every thing that is gross and sensual; while the never-dying spirit would burst from its confinement, elevated by greater attractions, and thirsting after superior pleasures; but the passions and prejudices acquired in its mortal habitation, are as chains, which bind it down to earth, and prevent it from reaching those heights, to which its aspiring nature seems capable of soaring.

We will not here join with those who lament the faint degrees of knowledge and excellence, which the soul, in its present

SERM. state, can attain. This perhaps were, in
I. some degree, to arraign the wisdom and
goodness of that Being, to whom we are
indebted for all our capacities and advantages, for every thing that we know, for every thing that we enjoy.—Men, indeed, by dwelling on the imbecility of our intellect, may find an ample theme for declamation; but while they are exaggerating our weakness, and exposing every latent spot and blemish of corrupted man, they forget, or purposely overlook, the many and great attainments of the human mind, even in its present limited and degenerate state. What variety of knowledge is within the reach of persevering industry! Hath not man removed almost every obstacle which lay in the path of science? Hath he not risen superior to numberless difficulties, and made such discoveries as strike us with astonishment in the review? Can he not trace causes by their effects, and demonstrate effects from their causes, with the nicest
10 precision?

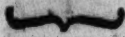
precision? Can he not examine the productions of the earth which he inhabits, explain their various properties, and convert them all to his pleasure and convenience? But, not contented with this narrow sphere of action, hath he not extended his views beyond this globe, and ascertained the magnitude, distances, and revolutions of the heavenly bodies? It were endless, and perhaps foreign to the present purpose, to enumerate what the mind of man is capable of acquiring; and I have only thus briefly touched upon the subject, that we may form some idea of the great powers of a SPIRIT, even when clogged with mortality.

Yet how superior to us must those ærial Spirits be, who surround the throne of Omnipotence, and are thought worthy to approach HIM, *from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away* *! They are not con-

* Rev. xx. 11.

SERM.

I.



fin'd to a single planet, beyond which they can only roam in fancy, nor limited to a few fleeting years of existence, the greater part of which must be employ'd in providing for the wants of the body; they are not chilled by despondence, fired by rage, or blinded by prejudice; all local extension is theirs to explore, and an eternity is before them; they have no appetites that call aloud for gratification, nor passions that will scarcely be controlled.

But in what language can we clothe our conceptions of the FATHER OF SPIRITS? Irresistible in power, for *He spake, and it was done**; unbounded in wisdom, for *He knoweth all things*†; infinite in goodness, for *look how high the heaven is in comparison of the earth, so great is his mercy also towards them that fear him*‡; unchangeable in his essence, for *God is the same yester-*

* Psalm xxxiii. 9.

† 1 John iii. 20.

‡ Psalm ciii. 2.

day,

day, to-day, and for ever^{*}; uninfluenced by those motives which sway mankind, he makes the unalterable obligations of justice, mercy, and truth, the only rule of his government; and though he knows no law but his own will, he cannot, from the excellency of his nature, do any thing cruel or unjust.

SERM.

I.

Every one must have observed that, in the holy scriptures, epithets are sometimes prefixed to the name of God, and actions ascribed to him, which, saith the objector, are utterly inconsistent with a spiritual and unchangeable Being; such as, *The Lord thy God is a jealous God* †.—*It repented the Lord that he had made man, and it grieved him at his heart* ‡.—*And the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart* §.—*Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord* ||.—*Bow down thine ear to me* ¶—with many other expressions

* Heb. xiii. 8. † Exod. xx. 5. ‡ Gen. vi. 6.
§ Exod. xi. 10. || Psal. xlv. 23. ¶ Psal. xxxi. 2.

SERM. of the same kind. But can the OMNIPOTENT be jealous? Can the immutable CREATOR repent, and feel that sensation of sorrow which his weak creatures experience? Will the ALL-MERCIFUL harden the hearts of his people, and preclude them from penitence? Hath the GREAT SPIRIT affections, passions, bodily organs?—Gross must be our ideas of our Maker, if we take these passages in a literal sense, and ascribe to the Deity the feelings and imperfections of man: But, since we can only delineate what we know, and judge of those things which are *not* seen, by those things which *are* seen, since none can form any conception of what they have never beheld, but by comparing it with something familiar to their observation, we are obliged, when we speak of superior beings, to describe their actions in the same words in which we describe the actions of mortals; and, as *no man hath seen God at any time*, nor been connected with any creature more
exalted

exalted than himself, his fancy clothes the
Creator in a human form. When we would
represent the glory of his habitation, our
ideas are borrowed from terrestrial splen-
dor; we suppose him seated on a golden
throne, while millions of vassals pay ho-
mage to him, and every thing, to which
mankind have affixed the ideas of great
and magnificent, surrounds him; yet this
is but the resemblance of an earthly mo-
narch: Nor, when our imagination paints
him as the punisher of the wicked, do we
cease to consider him as a corporeal agent;
for we image to ourselves an avenging
Ruler, grasping his lightnings and roll-
ing his thunder, directing the tempest and
controlling the elements.

SERM.

I.



Thus the expressions made use of by
the prophets, which ascribe bodily organs
and human passions to the Deity, were not
selected by choice, but adopted through
necessity. The Jews, who were a coarse
and

SERM. and unlettered people, could not have understood refined speculations on the divine essence; and, indeed, when the Almighty is represented as an agent, we must use nearly the same terms to the most cultivated; for human language can only describe human actions; the tongue of a finite and imperfect creature, cannot describe an infinite and invisible God.

I.
But our conceptions of Him, perhaps, will rise much higher than our words can express; and nothing will so enlarge the mind as frequent meditation on that great and immortal SPIRIT, *in whom we live, and move, and have our being.* This cannot be considered as a dull and tasteless duty, fit only for cloistered priests, or aged devotees; since it produces the highest gratification which the soul is capable of receiving. The noblest pleasure we feel arises from the beauty, magnificence, or sublimity of the object before us: Every thing that
is

is beautiful, is comprehended in the idea SERM.
of the ALL-PERFECT; every thing that I.
is magnificent and sublime rushes up-
on our minds when we reflect on HIM
*who maketh the clouds his chariot, and walk-
eth upon the wings of the wind.*

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ON THE

WORSHIP OF GOD.

ON

SERMON

ON THE

WORSHIP OF GOD.

S E R M O N II.

John iv. 24.

ON THE

God is a Spirit; and they who worship him, must worship him in Spirit and in truth.

W O R S H I P O F G O D.

IN the preceding discourse I considered the nature of a Spirit, and endeavoured to excite some faint ideas of the All-ruling Mind which animates the universe. God is incorporeal and intellectual; not an object of the senses, but of the understanding. His power is unbounded, his wisdom unsearchable, and his mercy and truth are as lasting as eternally. How much might be urged on this great subject! But I shall

SERM.
II.

S E R M O N II.

J O H N iv. 24.

God is a Spirit; and they who worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.

IN the preceding discourse I considered the nature of a spirit, and endeavoured to excite some faint ideas of the ALL-RULING MIND which animates the universe. God is incorporeal and intellectual; not an object of the senses, but of the understanding. His power is unbounded, his wisdom unsearchable, and his mercy and truth are as lasting as eternity. How much might be urged on this great subject! But

SERM.

II.

SERM. I shall content myself at present with what
 II. hath been already said, and inquire into the
 modes of worship that have prevailed in
 different parts of the world.

There is scarce a country, which perfecting curiosity hath discovered, whose inhabitants are without any forms of religion. Man, in his most uncultivated state, plainly perceives that there is a superior intelligence, from whom the human race proceed, and on whom they depend: This conviction, even in a savage, if it does not produce gratitude, will certainly awaken fear; if it does not move him to return acknowledgments for bounties already received, will at least incite him, by submission and entreaty, to deprecate the wrath of that Governor, who hath power to punish as well as to reward. Thus every people, however ignorant, will adopt some mode of addressing the Creator, conformable to the state of
 their

their minds and their ways of life : The
rough barbarian, who is perpetually mix-
ing in bloody contests, thinks of no other
deity but a god of battles, and decorates
the altar with the spoils of war, as the
means of obtaining protection in future
combats ; while the mild and more civi-
lized husbandman looks up to a Power
producing plenty, and reserves for the in-
visible Benefactor the first-fruits of his in-
dustry, that the earth may again bring
forth in liberal abundance.

SERM.³

II.

The religious rites, practised by the
natives of America when they were first
visited by the Spaniards, were found to
be absurd and cruel : Several tribes paid
divine honours to noxious animals ; many
deified their departed heroes, or their
chiefs while they were yet alive ; and
others, somewhat more intelligent, attract-
ed by the great objects of nature, adored
the sun, the moon, and the stars, from

SPERM. whose genial warmth and cheering light,
 II. they derived so many blessings. But even
 the most polished community of the western world, considered their gods as delighting in human blood: The wretched captives taken in war, were dragged into their temples, and butchered in the edifices consecrated to piety; and, while the conquerors stood by exulting, the reeking hearts of the victims were presented as an offering acceptable to the Deity: Nor were the enemies they had subdued the only objects of this savage slaughter; multitudes of their own people were yearly devoted to death: Even the parent, forgetful of every obligation, and insensible to the strongest ties of nature, deserted the dearest objects of his affection, and sacrificed his children to a senseless idol.

But if we turn away with disgust and horror from the American, who is naturally trained to cruelty by incitement and example,

example, or with scorn and contempt from the unenlightened Indian, who falls down before an heifer, or an image the workmanship of his own hands, what shall we say to the cultivated governments of Greece and Rome, who, at a time when most of the arts were brought to the highest degree of perfection, had such false ideas of God, such inconsistent notions of religion, and such disgraceful forms of worship, as are not now to be found, but among savages, totally uninformed and barbarous? Their Deities were represented as unjust, revengeful, intemperate, and lustful; subject to all the passions of men, and, in general, more depraved than their corrupt worshippers. The adoration paid to gods like these was worthy of their impure and sensual character; for we find that the ceremonies of the heathens were ridiculous, obscene, and abominable.

It may be said, that the learned of those

SERM.

II.

those countries rejected the belief of such monstrous divinities, whose existence was only credited by the unlettered vulgar, and that the philosophers entertained just and lofty ideas of the Supreme Being: It is true that many wonderful teachers arose, even amidst the darkness of paganism, who maintained the unity of the Godhead, enforced the obligations of natural religion, and laboured to regulate the lives of their disciples by the rules of morality; but the bulk of the people, little affected by speculative reasoning, and wholly insensible to the beauty of virtue, continued the dupes of superstition and the slaves of sensuality.

Thus we see that mankind, whether in a natural or in a civilized state, are never taught by the mere force of reason to worship God *in spirit and in truth*: The Almighty, therefore, vouchsafed to reveal himself to his creatures, and the Jews were selected

selected to receive the first declaration of his will. To them a law was prescribed, abounding in outward observances, which were either typical of something to come, or necessary to catch the attention of the multitude, who, if their forms of devotion had been more simple, would soon have been entirely carried away by the gaudy and pompous idolatry of the nations that surrounded them. In the Old Testament we find many of the attributes and perfections of the JEHOVAH, described with the energy and sublimity of divine inspiration; and exhortations to virtue, and dissuasions from vice, urged with all the force of truth, and clothed in the most beautiful simplicity of language: But the variety of ordinances, though adapted with infinite wisdom to the disposition of the people at the time of their establishment, were not designed to be permanent: The Israelites, corrupt in their lives, perverted the true meaning of their ablutions and ceremonies,

SERM.

III.

SERM.

II.

ceremonies, and placed their whole dependence upon external acts, notwithstanding they were so frequently told by their prophets, that God required mercy rather than sacrifice. The Mosaic institution, therefore, was but the introduction to a more perfect revelation; and when learning began to shine upon almost all the kingdoms of the earth, and the mind of man was sufficiently prepared by science and philosophy, to entertain so pure and unadorned a dispensation, the GOSPEL stepped forth, in all the beauty of holiness, to captivate, convince, and reform the world.

Yet, notwithstanding the peculiar excellence of its laws, and the convincing evidence of its authority, Christianity met with powerful and steady opposition. *The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed**. The priests and

* Psalm ii. 2.

governors

governors of the Jewish nation persecuted the disciples of Jesus from city to city; and the lords and princes of the Gentiles delivered up the preachers of righteousness to imprisonment and death. Blind guides appeared to mislead, false prophets arose to deceive, and many *departed from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils* *.

SERM.

II.

The impostor Mahomet, as the best means of attaining that eminence which his unbounded ambition incited him to acquire, pretended to a divine commission. As many passages in his Koran are borrowed from the Old and New Testament, we must not wonder if his descriptions are sometimes sublime, and his precepts just; but to these he hath joined many absurdities, the fruitful offspring of his own fancy. To his opponents he threatened inevitable destruction, to his followers

* 1 Tim. iv. 1.

he

SERM.

II.



he promised uninterrupted enjoyment, and artfully adapted his accounts of Paradise, to the sensual appetites of the Arabians. A system of faith, thus calculated to allure the herd of mankind, had the additional power of the sword to enforce it; and those who could not be won by the hopes of plunder, nor attracted by the expectation of his imaginary heaven, were proceeded against with all the rigour of war, and were compelled, after the slaughter of their friends and the devastation of their country, to acknowledge his authority, and receive his doctrine.

But some who were esteemed the most strenuous advocates for the Gospel impeded its progress by their dissensions and animosities.—In the earliest ages of Christianity, the gentle precepts of the Saviour were forgotten or despised by many of those who called themselves his followers; and the genuine worship of God, in simplicity and

and truth, in meekness and charity, was interrupted by furious discord and sanguinary persecution. At length the Church of Rome arrogated to herself a dominion over the consciences of men, assumed a power civil as well as ecclesiastical, controlled the councils of princes, and kept nations in awe by her daring anathemas.—Who would have imagined, that a religion so pure, so mild, and so humble as the Christian, could have been perverted to so gross, so arbitrary, and so haughty a superstition? But without entering at present into a minute investigation of her opinions, or a needless refutation of her tenets, I shall only mention a few instances, which will sufficiently shew, that this Church does not worship God *in spirit and in truth*.

She hath burthened her votaries with a thousand frivolous and useless injunctions, which, like the traditions of the Pharisees, divert the mind from the more important duties

SERM.

II.

duties of the moral law. She hath availed herself of every method to dazzle the senses and mislead the judgment: The magnificent decorations of her temples, the glittering splendor of her altars, the consecrated vessels, the fuming incense, fix the attention and gain the hearts of the weak and unthinking; while the gaudy trappings of the priests, and their artful practice of repeating the service in a language not understood by the congregation, impress the bulk of the people with a submissive respect and blind veneration for their ministers; which must be considerably increased by the power they have assumed of giving absolution, and of granting indulgences.

How inconsistent is all their pomp of devotion, with the plain and admirable instructions of JESUS to his disciples—*When ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall*

be heard for their much speaking: But enter into thy closet, and, when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly*.—Can we then for a moment doubt, that the silent address of the soul to its Creator, is infinitely more acceptable to the Father of spirits, than all the pageantry of masses and processions?

SERM.

11.

But the great charge of idolatry, which has been brought against the Romanists, they have not, with all their skill and subtlety, been able to refute. We are forbidden to *make the likeness of any thing in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or the water under the earth, to bow down to it, and worship it.* They may in vain tell us, that when they fall down before an image, or a picture, they do not adore that image, or that picture, but only the invisible per-

* Matt. vi. 7.

SERM.

II.

son it represents; since the heathens of old, who were confessedly idolaters, were not so senseless to consider their images of wood and stone as real gods; but they, equally with the catholics, addressed themselves to statues, as the figures or symbols of their deities.—Yet though it were not so, that establishment must be idolatrous, which allows for the object of adoration the soul of a dead man because it hath been canonized by a pontiff, when it is expressly declared, by that authority to which we all appeal, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve* *.

Thus are we led to conclude, that the various religions which have been embraced by mankind, were either wholly erroneous or shamefully corrupted. Some nations, uninstructed by the prophet or the sage, have been resigned to intellectual

* Matt. iv. 10.

darkness,

darkness, while others have been misled by false guides, who perverted the truth, and taught for doctrines the commandments of men.—We are next to consider the faith which we profess, that we may be able to determine whether these words of Christ can be applied to the Reformed Church, *The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth, for the Father seeketh such to worship him**.

* John iv. 23.

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false guides, who perverted the truth, and
ought for that reason the observance of
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which we profess, that we may be able to
ascertain whether these words of Christ
can be applied to the Roman Church.
The first point to be considered is, whether
the doctrine of the Trinity is held in Rome.
and in what manner. The Roman Church
professes the doctrine of the Trinity, and
holds it in the same manner as the
Church of England.

W O R S H I P O F G O D

ON THE
WORSHIP OF GOD.

S E R M O N III

John 4: 24

God is a Spirit, and they who worship him ought to worship in Spirit and in truth.

HAVING already made some few observations on the nature of God as a Spirit, and given a short account of the most considerable modes of worship which have been practised by mankind in different ages, we are now to review our present system of faith and practice.

In

S E R M O N III.

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III.

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III.

In pursuing this subject, I shall not enter into a minute and frivolous detail of the various sects and persuasions among us; still less am I inclined to weary you with a tedious and useless refutation of the errors, or an indecent derision and contempt of the opinions, of others; though there are some schisms which should be opposed by divines with all the force of argument and authority of scripture, because the tenets they hold are evidently destructive of virtue and morality, the great end and aim of true religion.

The Reformers, when they engaged in the important and arduous design of shaking off the chains with which the Romish usurpation had fettered mankind, could not be expected to overcome every prejudice, that had so long misled the world, and establish at once a complete and universal reformation. Man by slow, and almost imperceptible degrees, approaches perfection,

tion, but never attains it. The mist which bigotry, ignorance, or cunning had spread over the world, was too great to be soon dissipated, and permit the benignant light of the Gospel to shine forth in all its genuine and unfullied lustre.

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Though much was done at first, something remained for succeeding generations to improve; but perhaps it may now be said, that we have acquired as just and pure ideas of theology, as the blindness and infirmity of human nature are capable of entertaining. Our divines seem to have abandoned the dry and unprofitable debates of school-divinity, and, instead of perplexing themselves with arguments totally unintelligible to the bulk of their impatient hearers, and disgusting and unedifying to the few who might possibly comprehend them; instead of thus wasting their time and talents, they now call the attention of their auditors to plain and necessary

SERM. 2 necessary articles of faith, and the indispensable duties of practical piety.

III.

The Protestant Church hath abolished the pomp and idolatry of Romish worship; she hath strictly forbidden her votaries to bow before an image, or address themselves to a patron saint. She hath stripped the priest of his tinsel attire, and denied his power of absolution and remission; declaring that he cannot, by any authority vested in him as a minister, free the laity from the guilt of sin; but can only, as an expounder of scripture, explain the terms of salvation, and repeat the assurances of the gospel, that all who believe and obey shall find mercy and favour. God “pardoneth all those that truly repent,” not those who are absolved by the breath of an ecclesiastick; He accepts those who worship him *in spirit and in truth*, not those who make magnificent donations to useless monasteries, or present splendid

splendid offerings at gaudy shrines; who
ostentatiously feed the sloth of the living,
or vainly decorate the tombs of the dead.
Our clergy are taught to drop all preten-
sions to oppressive authority, and, by gen-
tleness and patience, by exhortation and ex-
ample, to win the hearts of offenders; and,
instead of thundering in the ears of the
multitude the denunciations of a pontiff,
to shew them the danger of incurring his
displeasure, who will scatter the wicked as
chaff before the wind.

SERML

IIII

The Church of England, though it hath
been accused by some sectaries of retaining
too much of Romish ceremony, hath not
established those rites which arm the priest
with any undue influence, or load the peo-
ple with any burthen some superstition:
The forms which she hath adopted are
few, and their intent is obvious; she as-
sumes no pretensions to infallibility, but
openly declares, that, "although the Church

" be

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“be a witness and a keeper of holy writ,
 “yet, as it ought not to decree any thing
 “against the same, so, besides the same,
 “ought it not to enforce any thing to be
 “believed for necessity of salvation*.”
 To the scripture she appeals for the truth
 of all her assertions, and bids us try her
 tenets by that unerring rule.

As our Church hath exposed the absurd
 and dangerous errors of the papal See, so
 hath she been careful not to obtrude upon
 mankind any new and imperfect opinions
 of her own. She hath endeavoured to pro-
 mote that kind of worship which is most
 suitable to the spiritual nature of God:
 She teaches us to confess our sins and un-
 worthiness; to implore forgiveness; to
 return our acknowledgements for the mer-
 cies we have received, and to entreat, with
 humility and submission, the continuation

* Article xx.

of

of the favour and protection of the AL-
MIGHTY.

SERM.

III.

Even from this confined and cursory view we may perceive, that the Protestant religion is the only one now subsisting, agreeable to reason, and conformable to the Gospel: We have seen the insufficiency of the light of nature, we have seen the corruptions which have disgraced revelation; then let us neither be moved by the cavils of scepticism, nor the casuistry of popery; but be equally on our guard, to resist the empty ridicule of the one, and the subtle refinements of the other; remembering, that however speciously they may strike our ears, they are but *as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal*.

We come now to enquire, with what offerings and with what disposition each individual should approach the ETERNAL, either when he unites with his fellow-
creatures

SERM. creatures in prayer and thanksgiving in
 III. the temples consecrated to devotion, or
 addresses himself to his God in solitude
 and retirement.

It is obvious, that the homage which we are required to pay, cannot be in the least serviceable to the great Author of our existence: God, being, of himself, all-powerful, can receive no addition to his authority from the submission of those, whom he can at all times compel to obedience; God, being, of himself, all-sufficient, can receive no augmentation of his felicity from the affection of his creatures, nor any increase of honour and majesty from the acclamations of the sons of men: Nay, to HIM, so far above all creation, the songs of angels and celestial spirits can bring no addition of glory or dominion. Then wherefore should man, the weakest and meanest of rational creatures, approach, with imperfect adoration, the throne

throne of Omnipotence? How can the
praises of man be acceptable to that Power
who cannot be dignified by the breath of
immortals? to that Power, who felt no
acquisition of honour when the morning
stars sang together, and all the sons of God
shouted for joy?

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But though we can add nothing to per-
fection, we may shew ourselves sensible of
his greatness, and our dependance; we may
shew that *his grace is not given us in vain*;
and, by reflecting on his nature, and ac-
knowledging his goodness, we may im-
prove our faculties, and acquire fresh mo-
tives to obedience. Men are commanded
to *pray without ceasing*, not that the Crea-
tor may be exalted by their prayers, but
that the creature may be made more per-
fect; not because devotion is beneficial to
God, but because it is the source of com-
fort and happiness to man.

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The same reason which prompts us to give thanks to the all-ruling Providence for his mercies past, urges us to entreat his future bounties; for, though *he knoweth what things we have need of before we ask him**, yet it is highly requisite that we should thus shew our trust in, and dependance upon God, and learn, by constantly imploring every thing from Him alone, to place less confidence in the world; to wean our minds from temporal delights and vicious gratifications; and to fix our affections on those spiritual advantages and unfading treasures, which become us to solicit, and which He hath promised to bestow.

Since then it is necessary to draw nigh unto Him, in what manner shall we address the MAJESTY OF HEAVEN? Few have doubted the expediency of some kind of

* Matt. vi. 8.

worship;

worship; but what diversity of opinions hath been formed respecting the mode of approaching the HOLY ONE?—*Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul*?* Let the deities of savages be appeased with slaughter and devastation; let their altars be stained with the blood of human victims; in their temples let parents plunge the dagger into the breasts of their children, and present the bleeding heart an offering of horror!—Our God hath declared, that *the carcases of the people who have burned their sons and their daughters in the fire, shall be meat for the fowls of heaven, and for the beasts of the earth†*. Shall I offer the fruits of the field, or the unblemished firstlings of my flock?—*Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers*

* Mic. vi. 6, 7.

† Jer. vii. 31. 33.

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*of oil *? Let the deities of pagans delight in the multitude of offerings, and the fat of fed beasts; the sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise †. Shall I mortify my body with abstinence? shall I torture my flesh with whips of iron? shall I clothe myself in sackcloth, and bow down my head as a bulrush?—Rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn ye to the Lord your God ‡.*

With humility and contrition, with meekness and charity, with veneration and submission, with gratitude and hope, let us approach our GOD, our FATHER, and our REDEEMER. Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us, therefore let us keep the feast; not with the old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth ||.

* Mic. vi. 7.

† Psalm li. 17.

‡ Joel ii. 13.

|| 1 Corinth. v. 7; 8.

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In the silence of retirement let us lift up our souls to HIM who liveth for ever; and forget not, amidst all the avocations of the world, the glorious Being by whom we exist. In public, let us join in prayer and thanksgiving *with one mind and with one spirit*, undisturbed by vain and sensual thoughts. Many there are, perhaps the greater part of every congregation, who, though they punctually assemble at the hours dedicated to devotion, and regularly join in the supplications of the church, yet too often suffer their attention to be engrossed with trivial concerns, and their minds to be occupied with the business of life: Can worshippers like these expect to derive any advantage from their presence in the temple of the Holy One, and *think that they shall be heard for their much speaking**? *This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me*†.

* Matt. vi. 7.

† Matt. xv. 8.

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Yet let not those too soon exult in their superiority, whose minds, in some respect, accord with their petitions, if they intrude themselves into the immediate presence of the Searcher of Hearts, while they are the children of disobedience, and the slaves of guilt.—Though I address myself to God with all the fervour of devotion, yet am conscious of any unrepented sin ; though I implore his pardon with all humility, yet resolve still to indulge myself in one darling vice, how can I expect his forgiveness and acceptance, who hath required unlimited obedience ? Do I withhold my bread from the hungry ? Do I oppress and tyrannize over my dependants ? Do I pursue my adversary with rancour, and shut my ears to the voice of reconciliation ? Do I load my neighbour with calumny, and repay my benefactor with ingratitude ? Do I proudly spurn the entreaty of the humble, and turn, unfeeling, from the pleadings of distress ? Then vain are all my prayers.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me? saith the Lord; bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the calling of assemblies I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. When ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes; when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow*.

Let not, therefore, the obdurate or the assuming imagine, that their addresses are acceptable to the Deity, since *the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.*

What remains but that we firmly resolve to break the bands of sin; to resist the gratifications of pleasure, and condemn the

* Isaiah l. 11, &c.

SERM. advantages of the world; to plant in our
 III. minds contentment, resignation, humility,
 and charity; and to trust in Jesus, who
 hath told us all things.

By the Prophets let all nations be admonished; by the Apostles let all nations be taught; by the SON of the HIGHEST let all nations be saved. Ignorance no longer spreads her cloud over the world; for the star hath appeared in the east, and guided us to wisdom and holiness. The hour is come, *when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.* For He who descended from heaven hath declared, that *God is a Spirit; and they who worship Him, must worship Him in spirit and in truth.*

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ON THE

NECESSITY OF GOOD WORKS.

S E R M O N IV.

ON THE

IMPORTANCE OF THE KINGDOM OF
HEAVEN

W H E N the Divine Author of our
religion had entered upon the
great work of preaching salvation to the
world, He selected the humble and the up-
right, rather than the great or the learned,
to be the witnesses of His actions, the
channels of His life, and the promulgators of
His doctrine. Attending up into a moun-

S E R M O N IV.

MATT. vii. 21.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.

W H E N the Divine Author of our religion had entered upon the great work of preaching salvation to the world, He selected the humble and the upright, rather than the great or the learned, to be the witnesses of his actions, the historians of his life, and the promulgators of his doctrine. Ascending up into a mountain,

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IV.



tain, he gave them his first instructions and exhortations in the presence of an immense multitude, which, attracted by the fame of his miracles, had already followed him from all parts of Judea. After extending the precepts of the law, and delivering a most admirable system of morality, he concluded with warning them not to be *bearers* only, but *doers* of the word; for not they who called upon his name were to be justified, but they who observed the will of his Almighty Father.

Yet, though our Lord himself hath here, and in many other passages of holy writ, expressly declared the necessity of obedience; though his apostles repeatedly assure us, that to hear and not perform is but to deceive ourselves; and though reason demonstrates the inconsistency of acknowledging the authority of the law-giver, and refusing to obey the law; yet such hath been the weakness and absurdity of

of man, as to expect that justification from particular modes of faith, and external rites of devotion, which can only be obtained by the union of piety and virtue.

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This blindness of the understanding hath been the consequence of those passions which corrupt the heart: When no criminal desires are indulged, truth is easily perceived; but when vice hath tainted the soul, every object is seen with a dis-tempered eye; right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsehood, are indistinctly blended together, and each image is presented to the mind discoloured and confused. While the judgment is thus perverted, we cannot wonder if the clearest evidence be rejected, the most striking conformity overlooked, and new interpretations given to accord with a depraved disposition and enthusiastic imagination.

Various

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Various have been the methods devised by men to deceive themselves, and wrest the scriptures to their own destruction. That great article of our belief, the redemption of mankind, hath by some been fatally misunderstood as tending to weaken the obligations of natural religion: Nothing but the most deplorable infatuation could ever have induced men to propagate an opinion like this, that He, who knew no sin, would contribute to establish it; that He, who abhorred all workers of iniquity, would offer up himself a sacrifice to divine justice, that his followers might violate the laws of righteousness without fear of incurring the penalty. This, indeed, is not asserted in direct terms by the most zealous and bigotted declaimers; but is surely maintained, in effect, by their preposterous doctrines; for if we declare that nothing else is required but a firm trust in the merits of Christ's sufferings, and a confident persuasion that He hath purchased

chased for us eternal salvation; if we say SERM.
that our good works are wholly useless, do IV.
we not *make Christ the minister of sin*, and
endeavour to convert the glorious Gospel
of truth and holiness into a covenant
establishing superstition and iniquity?
Who will forego the gratifications of vice,
when he expects no advantage from his
forbearance? Who will deal his bread to
the hungry, comfort the widow, and pro-
tect the orphan, when he is assured that
his good or evil deeds are equally unre-
garded by the Father of Heaven? Or who
will strive to ascend the rugged steep of
virtue, when he may find a short and
flowery path to felicity? Who will labour
to do the will of the Lord, when he may
be saved by calling upon his name?

We are as ready to acknowledge, as
those who affect such extraordinary hu-
mility, that we cannot, on account of our
good works, claim any thing of the Al-
mighty;

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mighty; we are unprofitable servants; our best resolutions are transient, our best endeavours are feeble, and in every action of our lives we must rather plead for pardon than demand reward.—If He, who observes the secret workings of the soul in its inmost recesses, should enter into judgment with his creatures, and try them by the strict rules of justice, no man living could stand before Him. *But there is mercy with Thee!* Influenced by that mercy, unmerited on our part, the God of nature hath sent his Son into the world, that those offences, from which we could not be justified by the law, might be atoned for by the oblation on the cross, and that the happiness which we could not claim as the recompence of our good works, might be acquired by belief in *Jesus*, and subjection to his word. But we contend, that men must *obey* as well as *believe*; that they must live soberly and righteously, as well as hope confidently; and that to sup-

pose they may continue in sin, because SERM.
Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us, is a IV.
monstrous perversion of reason and scripture, and one of the most dangerous and
fatal errors that ignorance or craft hath
spread among mankind.

But a willingness to attribute every
thing to faith alone, hath not been the
only method adopted by man to substitute
a part for the whole of religion. — Many,
who think that something further is ne-
cessary to salvation, place too great a de-
pendance upon outward ceremony, and,
with the precise Pharisee, are studious to
cleanse the outside of the vessel, while
the inner part remains foul and polluted.
They attend with solemn punctuality to
the forms of devotion, and, while their
hearts are chained to the world, they cry,
like the priests of Baal, from morning un-
til noon, *O bear us!* They are subject to
ordinances

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ordinances after the commandments of men, and judge you in meats and drinks.—Others there are who appear, upon every occasion, the most violent declaimers against all that dissent from them in rites and ceremonies, and they are forward to display the bitterest hatred to those whom ignorance may have deceived, or prejudice misled. Instead of endeavouring to convince their adversaries, by rational argument and engaging gentleness, they arm themselves with furious zeal, and stand forth, as in battle array, against all opposers. But even supposing their opinions to be orthodox, do they expect to make converts by compulsion, or to advance the cause of truth by turbulence and animosity? Will they not see that they are loading their party with disgrace, and drawing down reproach upon Christianity in general?—Let all such mistaken enthusiasts cast their eyes upon the meek and crucified Jesus, who, *when he*
was

was reviled, reviled not again; who, when his sacred person was dishonoured, his high office contemned, and his divine religion ridiculed, betrayed no marks of anger or resentment, but pitied the blindness and lamented the infatuation of his enemies. Or, did the apostles and first preachers of the Gospel assault their opponents with vehemence and hatred? Their armour was the breast-plate of righteousness, and their weapon the voice of persuasion. They shewed the firmness of their belief by the purity of their lives, and the truth of their doctrines by the force of their arguments. Attentive to the duties of their ministry, they journeyed from city to city to instruct and to reclaim; but, assuming no clamorous authority, they were gentle and patient unto all men.

The bigot hath, therefore, no warrant for his intemperate ardour, in the life of Christ, or in the actions and sentiments of

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his

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his apostles. The rage of hostility, and the threats of persecution, favour more of that religion which was propagated by the sword, than of that faith *which worketh by love*. Leave, then, such senseless, such unchristian violence to the ignorant and the designing; to those who either have not sufficient understanding to discover that the noblest of all graces is charity, or who, to accomplish their own crafty purposes, pervert the truth, and make a gain of their apparent godliness.

By men whose faculties are enlarged, and whose tempers are humane, the contrariety of sentiment and diversity of forms will never be observed with an eye of malignity. They are thankful for any superior advantages which they may enjoy, but they dare not deal condemnation upon the uninstructed. Not swayed by narrow prejudices, they regard the collective body of Christians as brethren, and consider them

is equally under the guardian care of the Almighty. They investigate the various opinions, and the different modes of worship, and uniformly adhere to those which appear, in their eyes, to be just and true: While they believe, that *if any man sin, he hath an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous*, they will not presume to limit his mediation; they will not assert, that he is the propitiation only for those who subscribe to such and such doctrines, for they know that the Messiah appeared upon earth *that the world, through him, might be saved*.

Those who would bar the door of salvation against all but their own party, whatever they may believe, and whatever they may pretend, know neither God nor Jesus: They deny the attributes of the Deity; they are blind to the character and declarations of the Saviour; they furnish the infidel with his most plausible objections,

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objections, and fight against that cause which they mean to defend; they wander in darkness, while they fancy themselves in the light, and mistake the instigations of a spirit of persecution, for the operations of the Spirit of Holiness.

Thus, in spite of admonition and example, have men been more inclined to shew their zeal by their words than by their actions, to reproach rather than persuade, and to cry Lord, Lord, rather than do the things which Christ hath commanded. The reason is obvious; a mere acquiescence in articles of belief, or a furious opposition to the tenets of others, is no sacrifice of vice or pleasure; whereas he who resolves to obey, must fly from every vicious indulgence, and relinquish every enjoyment, however dear, which is forbidden by religion. The covetous, whose delight is in heaping up riches, will not easily receive that law which enjoins him to give to every

every one that asketh. If you warn him to restore fourfold to those he hath defrauded, to release the debtor, and clothe the naked, will he not turn aside with incredulity and disgust? But he will attend with willingness, if you assure him that he shall inherit the kingdom of heaven by only trusting in the name of Jesus. The voluptuous and debauched is ill disposed to hear the monitor who exhorts him to deny all sinful and worldly affections, and to live a pattern of temperance and chastity; but he will eagerly embrace the doctrine which promises salvation to an unfruitful faith. No wonder then if error should be cheerfully entertained and acquire an extensive sway, since it is powerfully assisted by the depravities and vices of mankind: Reason is soon blinded by passion; the mind readily admits even the arguments of absurdity, when they release it from a restraint which it is unwilling to endure.

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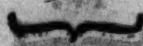
But is it necessary to repeat, that if we seek to be justified by Christ, while we ourselves are found sinners, we are wholly ignorant of the gospel covenant? Need we again be told, that if we raise our hopes of acceptance on external righteousness and immoderate zeal, we are endeavouring to erect as weak and unstable an edifice, as that which the foolish man built upon the sand?—Could men be persuaded to consult their own understandings, they would find little difficulty in distinguishing between the true Christian and the hypocritical pretender. Our Saviour hath given us an infallible rule, *Ye shall know them by their fruits.* Search narrowly into their lives; ask them not what they believe, an answer may always be prepared; but see what they practise:—In the uniform tenor of a good life there can be no deceit; in the secret practice of sin, in the indulgence of avarice, intemperance, and hatred, there can be no religion.—At the great day of account

account we shall not be judged by professions, but by that which we have done; we shall not be acknowledged as the disciples of the JUST ONE, because we have prophesied and called aloud on the name of the Redeemer; but because we have purified ourselves as he is pure, and overcome the world as he overcame it.

The degenerate descendants of the Patriarchs pretended that they were the legitimate offspring of Abraham, and as such looked with full confidence upon themselves, and with haughty contempt upon others; but CHRIST declared that they were not the lawful posterity of that faithful servant of God, nor entitled to his inheritance, *If ye were Abraham's children*, said he, *ye would do the works of Abraham*. So may it now be replied to those who boast that they are the followers of JESUS, because they have been partakers of his sacraments, "If ye were Christians, ye would

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“do the works of CHRIST.”—He said not, “Pay homage to me, and be eternally “happy.” but, *If ye love me, keep my commandments*: And his apostle writes, *Christ left us an example that we should follow his steps*. What was the conduct of Him whom we are required to resemble? He did no wrong, he knew no guile; he healed the diseased, and instructed the ignorant; he warned the sinner, and confirmed the good. Walk ye in the same path; be sober, be vigilant; protect the weak, and shame the vicious: And though ye are not able, like your divine Master, to expel pain and sickness by miracle, your benevolence at least may administer relief, and lighten the burden you cannot remove.

Then let us, and all who profess the religion of JESUS, the preacher of righteousness, regard attentively and weigh maturely what He hath taught, and not rashly

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subscribe to the opinions, and implicitly adopt the doctrines of men: It will be vain for us to plead his merits, if we do not conform our lives to his example; it will be in vain for us to contend with enthusiasm for his honour, if we do not shew our zeal for God by our obedience to his word: A confident, presumptuous belief will not avail; it is imperfect, it is unacceptable without its effects: *For though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing.* If I strive to despoil the tree of its fruits; if I endeavour to separate faith from good works, which God hath united, though I should speak with the eloquence of the sage and the ardour of the prophet, let me be accounted but the slave of artifice or the prey of insanity.

Let no one, however, for a moment suspect, by any thing which hath been advanced, that I would arrogantly persuade
men

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men to trust in their own righteousness, or presumptuously aim to degrade the all-sufficient merits of Christ. From any minister of the Gospel, far be such unwarrantable rashness, such gross impiety. Fallen, corrupted, lost, how can we dare to approach the throne of perfection in the nakedness of sin, or think to cover it with the flimsy veil of human virtue? What milder sentence can we expect than expulsion from Paradise, and shame, and sorrow, and eternal death? When we hear the voice of the Judge, shall we not hide ourselves in the thick darkness? When we see his face, shall we not shrink into nothing? But blessed be the MOST MERCIFUL! who, *through the blood of the everlasting covenant*, hath cleansed us from our offences, and clothed us with glorious apparel; who hath thrown wide the gates of a brighter Paradise, and given us *boldness to enter into the holiest*.

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To the REDEEMER then let us turn, on the MEDIATOR let us rely; yet to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. Submit to every commandment, fly from every appearance of evil; and whenever temptation assaults, draw nigh to Him whose grace alone can support, and he shall draw nigh to you. Be faithful and obedient unto death, and in the last day, when the glorious Majesty of Heaven shall be revealed, ye shall be called the servants of JESUS, and received into the regions of everlasting happiness.—But unto those who refuse to regulate their lives by the principles of Christian meekness, purity, and charity, our Lord will reply, *I know not whence ye are.* Admittance to eternal glory may be sought, but, by the wicked, no admittance will be found.

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To the Reader then let us turn
on the MAGNITUDE of his reply; yet to do
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such another God is not proper. Submit
to every commandment. If thou every ap-
pearance of evil; and whenever temptation
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ON

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION.

S E R M O N V.

Proverbs xxiii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go—

EDUCATION.

EDUCATION is of such obvious and extensive importance, that it hath at all times engaged the attention of those who have been most eminent for ability and virtue: Many treatises have been written to promote and improve it, and various plans have been formed to improve the road of science, and facilitate the progress of youth. All the effects that were expected have not perhaps been produced.

by rendering this an object of universal regard, have contributed to the diffusion of that power and those liberal modes of thinking, which now distinguish and adorn the majority of mankind.

PROVERBS xxii. 6.

Train up a child in the way he should go—

EDUICATION is of such obvious and extensive importance, that it hath, at all times, engaged the attention of those who have been most eminent for ability and virtue: Many treatises have been written to promote and improve it, and various plans have been formed to smoothe the road of science, and facilitate the progress of youth. All the effects that were expected have not, perhaps, been produced;

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SERM. v. duced; but the labours of the intelligent, by rendering this an object of universal regard, have contributed to the diffusion of that general knowledge, and those liberal modes of thinking, which now distinguish and adorn the majority of mankind.

Yet, while it hath been the study of the learned to disseminate information, and the care of the benevolent to found schools and seminaries for intellectual attainments, it is to be lamented, that the most noble and most necessary branch of wisdom hath been much neglected. The sole occupation of some thousands is to instruct the young in languages, arts, and sciences, while an equal number are employed to polish the exterior and regulate the deportment: But religion is, too generally, esteemed unfit to exercise the tender mind; those laws which give understanding to the simple, have been represented as too solemn and severe for childish gaiety and innocence,

innocence, or too dark and mysterious for
childish apprehension.

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Or, where this prejudice hath not been entertained, other concerns are accounted of greater moment. The man of superior rank is chiefly solicitous to qualify his offspring for pre-eminence and dignity; though, by their birth, they are entitled to much, they are incited to acquire more. They are led to the fountains of classic knowledge, and conducted through the gardens of eloquence: Their memories are stored with the transactions of former ages, and their minds enriched with the laws and policy of nations; while an artificial gloss is given to their manners, that they may dazzle the fancy, when they cannot convince the judgment. In all this the parent hath a view only to temporal advantages, and thinks of nothing beyond his great object, to see them shine in the senate and rise to the summit of

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power,

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power. The middle order of men, if they do not aspire so high, at least endeavour to place their children above the station in which they were born, and lead them to opulence if not to fame. The son hath those endowments improved, which are usually esteemed most useful in the pursuits of life, and is furnished with that species of intelligence which may best enable him to read mankind. The daughter is early initiated in the arts of displaying every personal attraction, and adorned with those accomplishments that engage the eye or captivate the ear; nor is any thing omitted by the fond parent, which may assist his children in their favourite schemes, and render them conspicuous and successful in the world.

But, without depreciating those talents or graces by which eminence, wealth, or admiration is acquired, we may surely pronounce that we have something else to learn :

learn: For though it were allowed that honour, riches, and applause really produce that happiness, which, in truth, they are never found to bestow, yet, since the time will come when all these things must pass away, since the inevitable hour is every moment advancing, which must bear all that live to the habitation of silence and darkness, should it not be our first care, in the education of youth, to remind them of the brevity of their existence, and prepare them for the awful change they must soon experience? No motive can be adduced to stimulate the father to holiness of living, which does not, at the same time, forcibly impel him to *train up a child in the way that he should go*. Is vice detestable, and shall we not teach our children to abhor it? Is virtue lovely, and shall we not teach them to delight in it? Is guilt the road to ruin, and shall we not exhort them to fly from it? Is religion the path of peace, and shall we not exclaim to the objects of our

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SERM. dearest affection, *This is the way, walk ye*
 V. *in it?*

A constant regard to the morals of youth is a duty we owe to our fellow-creatures and to our Creator, to society and to God. Society is an union of many individuals in one common interest: Each individual, therefore, as a member of the general body, is in all his actions to consider the general welfare. If then I am bound, by unalterable obligations, to avoid those practices which are contrary to the common good, I am also obliged to restrain those who are committed to my trust and management, that they may not hereafter, through my neglect, disturb the public tranquillity. The good are allowed to be more useful members of the community than the rich or the learned; and it is greatly in the power of a parent to form the infant mind to virtue, and render his offspring either an honour or a disgrace, a blessing or a curse,

to their country. *Like as the arrows in the* SERM.
band of the giant, even so are the young chil-
dren *. They are as powerful instruments, V.
when directed by the wise, as these weapons
of war in the possession of the mighty.

A far higher consideration, however,
enforces this duty upon us, for it is re-
quired by the great God of the universe,
Lo children, the fruit of the womb, are an
heritage, a gift that cometh of the Lord;
and this, as well as all other blessings, he
will expect us to cultivate and improve.
Should any earthly father place his child
under the care and tuition of a master,
with a strict injunction to direct the stu-
dies of his pupil principally to that parti-
cular employment for which he was de-
signed; yet, notwithstanding this, were
the tutor to neglect the purpose for which
he was chiefly entertained, and only teach

* Psalm cxxvii.

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such frivolous accomplishments as could be of little avail, would not the parent have ample reason to be exasperated, and would he not, as far as his power extended, severely punish the negligent instructor? The LORD OF HEAVEN formed his intelligent creatures that they might know and serve their GOD. *I have created him for my glory* *. This was the first great end of their being, and to this all other views should be subservient: To the parent the guidance of youth is entrusted, to the parent authority is delegated; but he is only the preceptor to explain the laws of their invisible Father, and lead them to the FIRST CAUSE from whom they originate.

Every parent designs to promote the happiness of his child; this is the point that terminates all his views; for this he

* Isaiah xliii, 7.

consumes

consumes his days in toil, and wastes his nights in anxiety: But *for what does he labour?* In our worldly affairs, we are told, by the highest authority, that we *disquiet ourselves in vain*, and experience amply confirms the melancholy truth. We labour for wealth like slaves in the mine, we grow rich, but we are still restless and dissatisfied; we grasp after authority, and fall from the dangerous pre-eminence; we look forward to distant periods, and death cuts off all our prospects. But in the *patient continuance in well-doing*, we find no uneasiness or disappointment; in the exercise of faith and hope, we meet with no airy exaltation and precipitate fall; in the practice of charity, our good deeds are not lost in the dust and buried in the grave, but the *bread which is cast upon the waters*, is found *after many days**. Have we not often assented to the truth of this?

* Eccles. xi. 1.

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Have we not often heard, have we not often acknowledged, that to fear God and to keep his commandments is not only the duty but the happiness of man? Why then are we still so eager in the pursuit of a shadow, and negligent of the substance? Why do we fix the attention of the rising generation on that which we know to be unprofitable and vain, and forget to shew them the true riches?—Without that content which religion inspires, abundance is tasteless, and magnificence is oppressive; in vain may we fix the objects of our care on the pinnacle of human greatness, in vain may we clothe them with the treasures of the east, in vain may we crown them with the garland of fame, if we neglect to fortify their minds with those principles of holiness which alone can give solid enjoyment to the most unbounded power, the most dazzling splendour, and the most exalted reputation.

If,

If, without the knowledge of God, they cannot enjoy the good things of life, how shall they be able to endure the evil? The means we take are often inadequate to the end; and should all our plans for their advancement be defeated by unforeseen events, should misfortune haunt their dwellings, and the hand of poverty weigh them down, how severely will they feel the want of a religious education! for wretched indeed are the afflicted who cannot look up to heaven for consolation, and intolerable is the burden of calamity, when it is not sustained by conscious integrity and trust in an all-ruling Providence. Had they been early shewn those never-failing sources of comfort which Christianity supplies to all who are broken of heart, they might have found *rest unto their souls*; had they been early taught to condemn all pleasures and advantages that came in competition with their duty, they might have hoped for deliverance from every enemy, and relied implicitly

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implicitly upon the ROCK OF AGES. Righteousness would have clothed them with impenetrable mail; hope would have added strength to their arm, and faith have pointed to a great and glorious prize.

If we should be induced to train up a child to piety, as the means of obtaining happiness in this world, how much more forcibly are we called upon to make this the chief object of our attention, when we reflect that religion is the only road to the happiness of eternity. Can all the enjoyments we are here labouring to procure for those we have nurtured, be opposed to that felicity which *eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived?*

But our own interest, the most powerful motive with mankind, prompts us to lead the young into the ways of wisdom. Nothing is more common than complaints of the decay of filial love, and of the little
 9 deference

deference and respect which is paid by children to the authors of their being; yet, although the most cruel returns are sometimes made to parental tenderness, perhaps, it will too often be found, that the disobedience of the child hath proceeded from some neglect or mismanagement in the parent.—Youth is naturally impatient of control, and hath need of all the restrictions of religion, as well as the ties of natural affection, to check that ardent desire of self-government, which, if not diligently watched, will soon grow too powerful to be resisted. Nothing can so effectually curb this ardour as the love of God and reverence for his laws: But where these are not cherished, we shall frequently observe, that every principle of union is soon weakened, free indulgence given to passion, and profligacy established upon the basis of infidelity. That father who hath educated his son only for the world, must not be surprized if filial duty is forgotten when-

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ever it comes in competition with worldly advantages ; nor can he rigidly condemn any deviations from virtue in him, whose principles were not early strengthened by the precepts and promises of the Gospel ; who was never taught to put on the helmet of salvation, and arm himself with the adamantine shield of faith, which can resist *all the fiery darts of the wicked*. Can it be expected that he who has never been admonished to venerate the great Creator, will honour the name of father ? Will he who hath never learned submission to the command of the Almighty, bend to the will of man ? Or can he be sensible of his obligations to the protector of his early years, in whose heart no principles of gratitude have been instilled towards his all-bounteous Benefactor and constant Preserver ?

Now, therefore, while the yielding disposition is capable of receiving the impression,

sion, let us inculcate the obligations of piety and morality, and eradicate those propensities to evil, which, if suffered to take deep root, will in time choke up and destroy all the noble and valuable productions of the soul, and reduce the mind of man to the state of an uncultivated desert. Dreary and melancholy is the prospect of the rude wilderness and the sterile heath; but more deplorable is the view of intellectual barrenness. Be it, then, our first care to sow that uncorrupted seed which will hereafter produce the fruits of righteousness, to the honour of God and to the benefit of man. The tranquillity of the parent, and the welfare of the child, are at stake; it is an obligation we owe to society, and a duty which is most strictly enjoined by HIM, who is the LORD and FATHER of us all.

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ON

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SERMON VI.

GENESIS xviii. 19.

For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.

WHEN the wickedness of Sodom was so intolerable that *the cry of* it ascended to the throne of JEHOVAH, He condescended, by the mouth of his holy angel, to commune with Abraham, and acquaint him with the destruction which awaited that abandoned city. *Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing*

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that he shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and that all the kingdoms of the earth shall be blessed in him.

This high distinction the Patriarch did not obtain on account of his own righteousness alone, but because it was foreseen that he would exhort his posterity to walk in the same paths, *For I know him, that he will command his children, and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.*

The motives which should induce mankind to train up their children in the ways of godliness, have been already considered, and are surely sufficient to enforce the discharge of this important obligation. But all that hath been urged on this subject may, perhaps, be esteemed superfluous; since it may be said, that none but the profligate neglect to shew their offspring the difference between virtue and vice; and
that

that no society of Christians can forget to instruct, in the principles of Christianity, those whom they have baptized in the name of CHRIST. But though it be admitted that none but the very worst of men think it wholly needless to inculcate the laws of morality and religion, yet we may appeal to every unprejudiced individual, whether they are enforced with that earnest assiduity, and so deeply rooted in the tender mind, as their importance demands?—Are the young convinced, by the conduct, as well as by the lessons of their instructors, that to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with God, is our greatest glory, our highest felicity? The contrary is too visible; and he who asserts that we are defective both in precept and example, will not, by an observer of the world, be censured as a wild and unreasonable declaimer.

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If then it be allowed that the cultivation of early piety is not the great aim of modern education, that it is, notwithstanding, a duty incumbent upon all men and productive of the highest advantage, it remains to be considered what is included in this obligation, and how we can be said, like faithful Abraham, *to command our children, and our household after us, that they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment.*

When the infant is brought to the font, to be made a soldier and servant of CHRIST, they who undertake to supply the office of a parent, engage, in the most solemn manner, that the child, for whom they are responsible, shall believe all the articles of the Christian faith, that he shall renounce all the works of the devil, the vain pomp and covetous desires of the world, and the sinful lusts of the flesh, and shall obediently

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ently keep God's holy will and commandments all the days of his life.

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These, like the promises we make in our intercourse with the world, are soon forgotten; or, perhaps, they were repeated without any intention of performance. If this neglect be culpable in the sponsor, it is much more blameable in the parent; since one great purpose of appointing the former, was to provide a substitute, that the virtuous education of the child might not suffer by the loss or negligence of the latter: Nor can it be doubted, that the parent is at least equally bound with the sponsor, to see that the infant is taught, as soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow and profession he hath made.

Nor is it long before the youthful comprehension is capable of receiving the first principles of religion. Refined speculations on the attributes of the Deity, the

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mysteries of revelation, and the full extent of the baptismal covenant, it were folly and madness to teach. That preceptor who labours, when the mental powers are just expanding, to impress them with abstruse and theoretical science, is like *one that beateth the air*. But the more obvious truths may very early be displayed. In their hearts that good tree may soon be engrafted, that shall rise like the grain of mustard seed in the parable, *which, when it is sown, groweth up and becometh greater than all herbs, and shooteth out great branches, so that the fowls of the air may lodge under its shadow* *.

Mercy and gentleness are certainly essential parts of our holy profession, and these amiable qualities may be planted even in the breast of infants; yet how frequently do we see them taught rather to en-

* Mark iv. 32,

courage

courage than to stifle the emotions of anger and revenge. Their passions are awakened, at every trifling incident, by those who should be most sedulous to allay them; and they are sometimes led to be cruel and inhuman, long before they are capable of perceiving how odious and detestable are cruelty and inhumanity. Parents themselves have seldom been sufficiently careful to expose and prohibit those barbarous sports, which harden the heart, when it ought to be most susceptible of tenderness, corrupt the temper, and contribute to form the rugged and unfeeling man.

As the capacities of the young vary, it is obvious that the instructor must proportion his lessons to the understanding of his pupil; but as soon as the impression can be made, let it be the care of every parent to fix the most necessary truth in the mind of his child, and to exclaim,

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with the King of Israel, *And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the GOD of thy father* *.

The existence of the ALMIGHTY is the first great article which we have promised in baptism to believe, and on this all the rest depend. It is the foundation of wisdom, of virtue, and of religion,

The knowledge of GOD is to be acquired by the contemplation of his works, and by the study of his word. The world is a fair volume, in which the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Creator are written in characters so legible, that *he who runs may read*. The young are naturally inquisitive; each object that strikes their senses excites curiosity; they are eager to be told how every thing which surrounds them was formed, and to what purpose it tends. These questions will be answered, by an intelligent monitor, in such a manner as

* 1 Chron. xxviii. 9.

may

may lead them from effects to the cause, and point out, to their awakening faculties, the great AUTHOR OF THE UNIVERSE. Thus will every production of nature be an instrument, in the hands of the wise, to proclaim the Power in whom we live.

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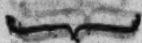
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By his works the ETERNAL can, in some measure, be displayed even to the apprehension of the youngest, but he is more clearly revealed by his written word. Could any shadow of doubt remain, after all the arguments of reason, from the prophets we have indisputable evidence of the existence of a God; *Thy throne is of old, thou art from everlasting* *. Were it possible that this beautiful and regular frame of things did not point out to us the invisible Architect, by the prophets we are expressly assured, that *God created the heavens and*

* Psal. xciii. 2.

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the earth *. Could we entertain any apprehensions that we were left without a protecting providence, by the prophets we are fully convinced that *He is our God for ever and ever ; He will be our guide even unto death* †. From these oracles the young may likewise be taught the moral law. The Israelites were required, by their great legislator, to instruct their descendants in the words they had heard, as well as to fix them in their own hearts, *Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up* ‡. Thus were the commandments, which had been engraved on tables of stone, to be the constant subject of their thoughts, and the theme of instruction to their offspring ; commandments which were to remain in force when the Jewish law should

* Gen. i. 1. † Psal. xlviii. 14. ‡ Deut. vi. 7.

be abrogated, and for ever to be obeyed by all nations who believed in the Sovereign Ruler of the universe, and hoped to obtain a better resurrection.

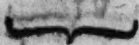
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St. Paul declares of Timothy, *his own son in the faith*, who was distinguished by such exemplary piety, that *from a child* he had *known the Scriptures*; and to this early acquaintance with the Sacred Writings, the apostle doubtless attributes much of that integrity and zeal, which so eminently appeared in his young disciple. If such excellent effects were produced by a diligent and frequent perusal of the Old Testament, what may not be expected from an early study of the New, in which those duties, enjoined by the prophets and teachers of Judah, are enforced with such superior weight and such additional authority? He *who ordereth all things both in heaven and earth*, more effectually appearing to the sight of men, through the Gospel, than

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when he walked before the Israelites in the pillar and the cloud, and more powerfully speaking by his Son, and delivering his mandates by his holy apostles, than when Sinai shook at the presence of the Deity, and JEHOVAH spake by the mouth of Moses, *I am the Lord thy God.*

Let this day-spring from on high dawn upon the opening reason : It will lead to virtue ; it will lead to God. Can any motive be conceived to holiness of life, which is not urged in the Gospel ? It attracts hope, it awakens fear ; it invites, it entreats, it warns, it threatens. The way of salvation it clearly demonstrates, and offers, to repentance, pardon and peace : It promises the peculiar grace of the Almighty to assist our feeble endeavours : It displays the most glorious rewards, and exhibits the brightest example in the life of Him, who overcame the world, and sin, and Satan.

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But while the youthful student is examining these holy records, it should be our care to keep from his view those plausible objections to revelation, which have too great an influence upon the inconsiderate. The affectation of displaying superior discernment is always most visible in those who are but just entering into the path of knowledge; and many a young man hath assumed infidelity, weakly supposing that he shall shew the acuteness of his judgment, by seeming to despise received opinions. Nor is this the only inducement. At a time when the passions begin to exert their force, and the heart bounds at the expectation of pleasure, that moderation, which the Gospel inculcates, is considered as a grievous restraint, and the law of holiness as an intolerable burden. He who is become a slave to his appetites, cannot but secretly wish that the opinions of scepticism may be well founded, which will free him from what he calls the oppressive

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pressive yoke of religion. Then suffer not the delusions of unbelievers to approach the young. Not that Christianity, in its true and native purity, shuns the light, and retires for security into the mists of ignorance; we trust that the more it is examined, the more confident ye will be that it is *the power of GOD, and the wisdom of GOD*: But let not the mind be early prejudiced against it, before the understanding hath attained sufficient strength to weigh the whole of its evidence with candour and impartiality.—When the faculties are in their full vigour, and the heart is unbiaſſed by vicious affections, let every man try and scrutinize into the important question, which ſo nearly concerns us all, and *he ſhall know, of the doctrine, whether it be of GOD* *.

Yet the parent ſhould not be ſatisfied with exhorting his children to ſearch the

* John vii. 17.

Scriptures :

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Scriptures : To his care that they are instructed in the will of Heaven, let him add a most watchful attention to guard them from the temptations of the world. Evil example is too prevalent. The thirst of pleasure seems now to prevail universally. The majority of the aged have forgotten their peculiar propensity to gather together, and join with the young in scattering abroad. The gratification of the senses is eagerly sought ; the vanities and follies of dissipation must be constantly fed ; and the wealth, so ardently loved, seems desired for little else but to nourish our vices, and to destroy our principles. From such corrupt communications be careful to preserve those who are committed to your management. Fix a vigilant eye upon their amusements and connections ; arm them against the seductions of the wicked, and keep them from that state of idleness, which is the root of vice.

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But it is not here to be understood, that no other book than the Bible is to be studied, and no other intercourse admitted, between father and son, than serious exhortation. We only argue that religion should be the first and greatest branch of education. It were amply sufficient could every parent be persuaded to be as anxious for the eternal, as he commonly is for the temporal welfare of his child.

Such is the faint sketch of parental duty. But vain are all our admonitions and instructions, if our conduct does not correspond with our precepts. What will it avail to command our children to keep the way of the Lord, if we walk not in it ourselves? What will it profit to teach them justice and judgment, while we oppress the weak, and defraud the credulous? Or how can we persuade the rising generation to set their affections on things above, while

while they see that our thoughts are wholly engrossed by the world ?

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If then the aged expect to be regarded, let them stand forth illustrious patterns of holiness; let them shew that they have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts, and that they seek, above all things, the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Then may they with effectual authority exhort *their household after them*, and prescribe the laws of the LORD, *that the generation to come may know them, even the children which shall be born; who shall arise and declare them to their children* *.

Of him who thus instructs by precept and example, the blessing of Heaven shall doubtless be the joyful recompence. He shall feel its enlivening influence descending on his head, like the dew upon the

* Psal. lxxviii. 6.

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mountains of Zion. His labours shall be prosperous; his end shall be peace. Can any thing be more cheering to the heart of man, than the sight of an innocent race, *like the olive-branches round about his table?* While he beholds them increasing in wisdom and in stature, what can afford such true delight as the reflection, that, through his care and vigilance, they are rendered kind, obedient, and virtuous? As they advance in years, he finds them in all his labours his best assistants, and in all his troubles his best support. When the infirmities of age assail him, those whom he hath nurtured contend with filial tenderness to amuse and sooth him. In the concluding scene of life, he hath the comfort to observe them useful to the world, and affectionate to each other. His last moments are sweetened by the assurance, that they will be tranquil here and happy hereafter; and, conscious of having discharged the duty of a parent, he anticipates

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pates the glory that awaits him in that region, where, with those *that turn many to righteousness, he shall shine as the stars for ever.*

ON THE
SHORTNESS AND VANITY
OF LIFE

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ON THE
PSALM XXXII.

FORGIVENESS AND VANITY.
blessed, and mine age is as nothing before
thee; Griefs every morn, to thy faith
is altogether vanity.

THE shortness of life is become to
little and proverbial an observa-
tion, that it is regarded with levity, and
heard with indifference. The most serious
truths make little impression; the most
solemn warnings are little regarded. We
behold the grave perpetually opening to
receive

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PSALM xxxix. 5.

Behold, thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every man, at his best state, is altogether vanity.

THE shortness of life is become so trite and proverbial an observation, that it is repeated with levity, and heard with indifference. The most serious truths make little impression; the most solemn warnings are little regarded. We behold the grave perpetually opening to

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receive those with whom we have been conversant; but, unless some peculiar connection is dissolved, we behold mortality without emotion. The soldier, in the heat of the battle, though his courage is aided by the hurry and bustle of the action, can scarcely view his comrade falling at his side without visible terror, and though he is conscious that the least mark of cowardice will blast his fame for ever, he cannot forbear to shudder at the thought, that, perhaps, the next moment may terminate his existence. Yet in the great field of the world, the Christian soldier sees his companions fall on his right hand and on his left, with little reflection upon his own danger, till he feels the blow that levels him with the dust.

In this beautiful and sublime psalm, the pious author reviews the shortness and vanity of life; and, while he meditates on the instability of human affairs, his heart kindles

dles within him, and, in all the warmth of devotion, he addresses himself, in this forcible apostrophe, to the Author of his being: *Lord, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days what it is; that I may know how frail I am!* which immediately introduces the exclamation that hath been chosen for the present subject of our thoughts; *Behold thou hast made my days as an hand-breadth, and mine age is as nothing before thee; verily every man, at his best state, is altogether vanity!* He entreats his Creator to make him thoroughly sensible of the end which must happen indiscriminately to every one, and prays that he may constantly remember the frailty of his nature, since the time he had to prepare for eternity was so short, and since man, in his most prosperous condition, was the child of vanity.

First, to support the assertion that our days are *as an hand-breadth*, or, as the
older

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older translation hath expressed it, *as a span long*, no arguments can surely be necessary: This truth is frequently the subject of discourse, and frequently evident to our senses, and no one was ever yet so absurd as to deny that the grave is the common receptacle of the human race, and that *one event happeneth unto all; to the righteous and to the wicked*. Nor was sentence of death pronounced upon man alone; all creatures that move upon the earth, that divide the waters, or cleave the air, must experience the same fate; *for that which befalleth the sons of man befalleth beasts; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath, so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast. All go unto one place, all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again**. The same propensity to decay and corruption pervades the works of nature and the labours of art; all that hath been formed from the beginning of time, and

* Eccles. iii. 19, 20.

all

all that the contrivance of man hath been able to produce. The vegetable world hath its infancy, its maturity, its decline, and death. The flower arises, blooms for a season, fades away, and perishes. The tender sapling shoots forth, and, by degrees, covereth the hills with its shadow; but the next generation sees it withered and hewn to the ground. The most curious piece of mechanifm which the skilfullest artist can frame, as soon as it is brought to perfection, begins to wear itself away by its own motion. Thus doth every object, around the contemplative man, remind him of that diffolution which is common to every thing under the sun.

When we look back upon the time that is past, how short does it appear! The transactions of years seem like a fucceffion of visions, and equally trifling and vain, with those thoughts that agitate the mind when memory and reason sleep, and fancy presents

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presents an assemblage of wild and confused ideas.—If we measure that which is to come by that which is past (and nothing can be more reasonable than such an estimate), we shall perceive that life, at its most extended period, is but as a point. Man comes into the busy world, mixes awhile in its cares, occupations, and fatigues, and passes through it as the cloud that flies over the meadow, and leaves no track to mark its course. *The sun ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteneth to the place whence he arose* * : So man enters upon his terrestrial pilgrimage, pursues his journey, and hastes to the abode from whence he came. *Unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again* : So man glides imperceptibly away ; to the earth from whence he was formed, thither he returns. The wave that now appears, is urged on by the waves that follow upon the sands, and makes no

* Eccles. i. 5.

impression

impression to discover where it flowed: So, after a short time, there is no remembrance of one man more than of another, for *that which now is, in the days to come shall all be forgotten. And how dieth the wise man? As the fool**. This, perhaps, of all others, is the most mortifying reflection to the wise men of this world, that all their boasted and envied knowledge cannot exempt them from the same fate which attends the meanest of their species, the most groveling of the brute creation, and the obscurest weed that creeps along the ground. Let the philosopher consume his days and nights in mental labour, improve every faculty with which he hath been endowed, and penetrate into the deep recesses of learning: Let science pour her treasures into his lap, and fame declare his pre-eminence from nation to nation: Yet the hour approaches when *he shall turn again to his*

* Eccles. ii. 16.

earth,

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earth, and then all his thoughts perish. The eye which explored the volumes of antiquity, and traced the various productions of the globe, shall be closed in darkness; and the voice which wisdom inspired, shall be heard no more.

To us, life is as a span; but to the ETERNAL, it is as nothing: Mine age is as nothing before thee. Human understanding cannot conceive how inconsiderable must be the portion of human life to HIM who liveth for ever and ever; to HIM, who before the mountains were brought forth, or ever the earth and the world were made, was GOD, from everlasting, and world without end. Thousands and ten thousands of years, in his sight, are but as yesterday in the sight of man. Ages pass away as a watch in the night. Beautiful as this allusion of the psalmist's is, it can scarcely afford an idea*

* Plal. xc. 2.

sufficiently

sufficiently distinct and forcible of the velocity of time before the eye of OMNIPOTENCE. The period of our existence is less than any comparison can express—it is as nothing.

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The chief care of a wise man is to provide for those events that are foreseen. Death is an event which all can foresee; yet, for that, how few are studious to provide! Have we not often wished to discover what shall happen hereafter, that we might arm against impending danger? Without lifting up the veil which hides the future, we are convinced that death must infallibly overtake us; yet for that threatening enemy how few are sedulous to arm! We are negligent, but not through ignorance; we are supine, but not through exemption from peril. The particular moment when the soul shall be separated from the body is indeed unknown; but we are certain that our time is short. Man is

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a plant that flourishes but a day : *In the morning he is green, and groweth up ; but in the evening is cut down, dried, and withered.*

Nor can our carelessness proceed from an idea, that our departure to another world is not an object of sufficient importance.

What reward would be esteemed too great for him who should inform us of an approaching incident, by the knowledge of which we might acquire the wealth of the Indies and the empire of nations ? Or what should we think that seer deserved, who, by displaying the page of futurity, might teach us to escape perpetual misery ? Yet is not the end with which we are already acquainted, the end for which we neglect to provide, of more consequence than the acquisition of silver and gold, of power and dominion, the treasures of kingdoms, or the government of worlds ? Is not the certainty that we are to *die*, of which we want no information, infinitely more important to us, than the foresight

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fore-sight of any accident, that might involve us in poverty, disease, and anguish? By duly considering this momentous truth, that the long *night cometh*, can we not stimulate our sluggish virtue, confirm our weak resolutions, and secure such riches and dominion as will continue when all the peopled planets are consumed? By this awful reflection, that death is the gate to eternal happiness or misery, can we not learn so *to apply our hearts unto wisdom*, that we may escape the worm which never dies!

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With slow, perhaps, but with steady pace, the universal destroyer approaches; yet sometimes he suddenly appears, and steals upon us, like a thief in the night, when we are slumbering and defenceless. Will not this induce us to have always our *loins girded* and our *lamps burning*? Shall we not perform immediately all that remains undone?—*Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening*; but

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if

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if he neglects his work and his labour during the light of day, the darkness closes upon him, and his task cannot be completed. A day is the utmost space of time allowed him; but many are called away by the Lord of the vineyard, as soon as the sun is risen; many are called away ere noon; and few remain in the field when the sun goes down.—Does the prudent man forget that the opportunity of advancing himself in the world will soon be lost? Does he behold wealth and distinction in his reach, and neglect to grasp them? Does he pass by the good things of this life, and exclaim, “To-morrow will be time enough to be rich; the next year will be time enough to be great?” No:—In the dawn of his existence he engages in the pursuit of interest or pleasure; with unremitting eagerness he continues the chase through all the stages of his being, and scarcely resigns it even when his powers are spent and his strength faileth.—A distant period

is *not* soon enough to think of treasures that perish with the using, or of honours that fade while they are planting; but a distant period is soon enough to think of treasures that never waste, and of honours that never decay!

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This strange infatuation of preferring the present to the future, of providing for an hour and neglecting eternity, leads the contemplative mind to conclude, as did the king of Israel, that *every man walketh in a vain shew, and is altogether vanity*; vanity from the frailty of his nature, vanity from the folly of his pursuits: *He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.*

The heaping up of riches hath always appeared to the truly wise, as a most distinguishing instance of human weakness. How inconsistent, that a being, capable of reflection, sensible how short a time he

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can remain upon this globe, and beholding how insufficient is wealth to the happiness of others, how unaccountably inconsistent, that a creature, thus taught by reason and experience, should consume the greater part of life to procure what will make itself wings and flee away; or, if it remains, will remain only to harass and distract him! *The sleep of the labouring man is sweet, but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep.* This was the case in the days of Solomon; this hath been the case since treasure was first dug out of the bowels of the earth; or rather, since one man became distinguished above another, by the number of his flocks, and the extent of his possessions: With us it is still the same at this day, and will continue to be so, till the world and all its splendour shall be turned into dust. Indeed it seems to be designed, by that over-ruling Providence, which established every cause and produces every effect, that the vice of avarice,
like

like all other vices, should be its own punishment, and that he who had been injuring and oppressing others, through avidity to accumulate gold, should, after the toil and anxiety of acquisition, be constantly tormented with the fear of deprivation.

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But it is not the covetous only who are here said to heap up riches; almost every man, at some period or other of his life, endeavours to obtain more than is necessary for support and convenience, and looks forward to some time when he may rest from every toil; without considering that such a state is incompatible with the nature of man, who was born to labour, and who cannot be satisfied without labour.

What then will wealth avail? Can it afford that happiness to those we leave behind, which it could not give to us?—It

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may lead our children to vice, but seldom will it make them wiser or better. We can *heap up riches*, but we know not *who shall gather them*. They may increase avarice, they may promote sensuality; they may fill the coffers of a miser, or be scattered among the foolish and the profligate.

Another lively instance of the vanity of life is, that man is disquieted *in vain*. Let any one remark the thoughts that arise in his mind in the course of a single day, and he will find that the greater part are dictated by some busy solicitude for the future; and let him further remember what was the apprehension which caused that solicitude, and he will generally find, from the event, that he was anxious *in vain*. The evils that await us we can seldom foresee, and what we foresee we can seldom prevent; yet we are scarcely ever satisfied with the present scene, but idly and foolishly are for prying into distant prospects,

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prospects, which the ALL-WISE hath graciously hid from our sight.

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Thus doth every man walk in a vain shew. The richest among us, harrassing himself with the cares of abundance, the most powerful, distracted with the toil of dominion, the wisest disquieted in vain, and every man shewing himself to be, *in his best state, altogether vanity.*

From this conviction then, let us turn our eyes to another existence, in every point the opposite of this; where we shall neither be distressed by apprehension of the future, labouring for perishable dross, nor liable to that stroke which cuts off all our enjoyments. The vanity of life should lead us to reflect upon death, and the thought of death should incite us to prepare for eternity.

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The inferences which result from these reflections on the shortness of our terrestrial pilgrimage, are immediately obvious; and all that can be urged on a subject like this, hath been so frequently adduced, that it may appear wholly needless to lay before you such trite and familiar observations. But we perpetually forget the truths we know; we have constant occasion for the repetition of the very same remonstrance. Even in the hour of sobriety and leisure, we are desirous to banish from our minds all serious and melancholy ideas. The view of dissolution is shunned even in the deepest solitude; much less will we permit the awful prospect to intrude itself upon us, when we are occupied with the toils of business, or allured by the blandishments of pleasure. That institution, therefore, cannot be too highly applauded, or too thankfully acknowledged, which appoints one day, in every seven, for pious meditation and religious worship. The Sabbath releases

us from all worldly avocations, awakes our
torpid attention to the concerns of eterni-
ty, and affords us the means of securing
our hearts against every temptation that
surrounds us. In the temple sacred to His
name, we may undisturbed address the
KING IMMORTAL AND INVISIBLE, who
will *hear from heaven, his dwelling-place,*
and when he heareth, will forgive: We
may listen to the Gospel of light and life,
and learn, while we behold ourselves en-
compassed by the monuments of the dead,
to prepare for the mansion appointed for
all the living.

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*For man knoweth not his time; as the
fish that are taken in an evil net, and as
the birds that are caught in the snare, so
are the sons of men snared in an evil time,
when it falleth suddenly upon them* *. Every
hour, every moment should be diligently

* Eccles. ix. 12.

improved,

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improved, for the moment that is past returns no more. The grave is no place for repentance. In the cave of darkness and silence no work can be performed. What is here unfinished, can never be completed; what is here lost, can never be regained.—Is life transient? then *set thine house in order*. Is eternal joy to be sought? then be vigilant and holy.

ON
A FUTURE STATE
OF
REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS.

ON THE
FUTURE STATE

REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS

The future state of the soul is a subject of great importance to all who are desirous of attaining to the highest degree of happiness. It is a subject which has occupied the minds of philosophers and divines from the earliest times. The ancient Greeks and Romans had their notions of the future state, and the Jews and Christians have theirs. The Christian religion, however, has given us a more full and complete view of the future state than any other religion has. It has shown us that the soul is immortal, and that it will be rewarded or punished according to its conduct in this life. It has shown us that the rewards of the future state are not temporal, but eternal, and that the punishments are not temporal, but eternal. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who love God and their neighbors, and that the punishments are given to those who love themselves and the world. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are faithful to God and His commands, and that the punishments are given to those who are disobedient to God and His commands. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are pure in heart, and that the punishments are given to those who are double-minded. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are meek and lowly in spirit, and that the punishments are given to those who are contentious and proud. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are patient and long-suffering, and that the punishments are given to those who are impatient and quick-tempered. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are kind and merciful, and that the punishments are given to those who are cruel and unmerciful. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are faithful to their promises, and that the punishments are given to those who are unfaithful to their promises. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are diligent in their duties, and that the punishments are given to those who are negligent in their duties. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are sober and temperate, and that the punishments are given to those who are drunken and intemperate. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are chaste and continent, and that the punishments are given to those who are unchaste and incontinent. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are humble and lowly, and that the punishments are given to those who are proud and lofty. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are gentle and mild, and that the punishments are given to those who are harsh and severe. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are peaceable and quiet, and that the punishments are given to those who are contentious and quarrelsome. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are merciful and forgiving, and that the punishments are given to those who are unmerciful and unforgiving. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are kind and loving, and that the punishments are given to those who are cruel and hateful. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are faithful to their friends, and that the punishments are given to those who are unfaithful to their friends. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are faithful to their families, and that the punishments are given to those who are unfaithful to their families. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are faithful to their country, and that the punishments are given to those who are unfaithful to their country. It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are faithful to their God, and that the punishments are given to those who are unfaithful to their God. 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It has shown us that the rewards are given to those who are faithful to their God, and that the punishments are given to those who are unfaithful to their God.

S E R M O N VIII.

ROMANS ii. 7, 8.

To them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life: But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath.

ST. PAUL, who was peculiarly the apostle of the Gentiles, in all his writings labours to free them from the ceremonial observances of the Mosaic institution, which the Jews wanted to obtrude upon the heathen converts to Christianity;

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tianity; and, with the strength of reason and authority of Scripture, he exposes the false opinions, which, being generally entertained and industriously propagated by his nation, gave much vexation to individuals, and disturbance to the church.

In this epistle he enters into a full discussion of the privileges that were claimed by the Israelites, and refutes their erroneous notions of justification and election. The covenant made with Abraham to bless his posterity, and the promises given to the patriarchs, that their seed should be a chosen people, were considered by the Jews as fully entitling them to the favour and protection of their JEHOVAH, even though they should not implicitly obey his commandments, nor practise the duties of morality: For they argued, that God was bound to receive and to bless them, by the engagements into which he had entered with their progenitors. They
called

called themselves his adopted children, and asserted, that all their offences were sufficiently expiated by circumcision and sacrifice, and the other rites of the Levitical law.

In opposition to these pretensions, St. Paul declares, that all who commit sin, whether Jews or Gentiles, are liable to punishment; and that the promises made to Abraham, can only extend to those who walk in the steps of Abraham. The Jews, as they enjoyed superior advantages to the Gentiles, were under greater obligations to holiness of life, for to them was more clearly *revealed from heaven the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men* *. They had been taught to *do justice and to love mercy; to wash their hands in innocency, and to make them a new heart and a new spirit*. The sacrifices and obla-

* Rom. i. 18.

tions,

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tions, therefore, of those who, while they knew the will of God, neglected to perform it, could never be acceptable to Him, who would render to every man according to his deeds; To them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Greek: For there is no respect of persons with God.

Thus did the apostle entirely overthrow the presuming claims of his countrymen to justification and election, and clearly demonstrate, that not the *bearers*, but the *doers* of the law, were just before God: For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law; and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law.

That

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That a time will come, when the Governor of the Universe shall judge the world in righteousness, can never be doubted by any who believe in the attributes of the Deity, and the immortality of the soul. But, before I enter upon the proofs which establish this most important truth, we will consider what would be the condition of mankind if no such persuasion were cherished.

Had we no idea of a future state, no prospect beyond the regions of mortality, our days would be passed in gloomy inaction, and the time of our sojourning here would be a period of dejection, of sorrow, and of despair. The reflection that we were born only to die, must so often arise in every mind, and the dismal uncertainty of our continuing upon earth even for the succeeding hour, must so often strike the most careless, that *if in this life only we had hope*, man would be indeed a miserable being.

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being. Death, which even now is so terrifying to mortals, as the termination of all earthly connections, and the dissolution of all earthly pleasures, would become intolerable, when considered as the end of all things, the total extinction of our nature, the annihilation of soul and body. Every cheerful image would be repressed by this gloomy thought; every attraction, which now gives spirit to industry, would lose its power: The dread of that approaching moment, when all our thoughts should perish, would haunt us like a phantom, transform the busy stage we now tread into a theatre of lamentation, and present one unchanging scene of listless despondence and anxious perturbation.

To prevent these melancholy effects, the great Lord of the universe indulged his creatures with the hope of some other existence, when this earthly tabernacle should be dissolved. In those countries where the Jewish dispensation

dispensation was unknown, He raised up philosophers, who confirmed this expectation in the wise and discerning, by conclusions drawn from the attributes of the Deity, and the faculties of man: Nor were the unlettered vulgar, though their ignorance of science prevented them from profiting by abstruse speculations, without a sincere belief in the immortality of the soul. No mental blindness was sufficient to obscure, no gross corruption was able to obliterate this fundamental doctrine of religion, which seems to have been engraven on the human heart by the finger of God.

Of the various arguments advanced to prove that we shall live hereafter, it may be sufficient to mention those which are most worthy of regard, and which carry with them all the conviction that can result from reasoning.

SERM. The general consent of all nations in
MIL. all ages.

The sense that every individual entertains of right and wrong, and the conviction he feels of being accountable for his actions.

Our ardent desire of happiness, which is never to be found in this vale of vanity. And,

The unequal distribution of good and evil in this first stage of our existence.

By the accounts that have been transmitted to us from the beginning of time, we learn, that amongst every people the belief of a future state of rewards and punishments hath prevailed; in polite and cultivated societies; in wild and barbarous climates. The polished nations of the heathen, in ancient days, though they worshipped

worshipped a multiplicity of deities, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, yet had a firm persuasion of a life to come, in which the just should be rewarded with unceasing happiness, and placed in an Elysium blooming with perpetual spring; while the unjust should be separated from the innocent, and thrown into Tartarus, to abide in misery for ever.

Nor hath this idea been wholly unknown in any quarter of the globe, which hath been pierced by the eager curiosity or restless ambition of the moderns. The most untutored savage of the rudest tribe, looks forward to that happy period, when, exempt from the inclemencies of the seasons, and freed from the oppressions of invaders, he shall be transported to a region, where he may pursue the chase unmolested, or sit down to the banquet with the spirits of departed heroes: Nor does he

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doubt that punishment is designed for the wicked, as well as recompense for the virtuous. Warmed by the remembrance of recent injuries, he delights his imagination with the prospect of instruments of torture, prepared in a future world for those who have trampled upon the weak, and rivers of melted gold reserved for the hostile intruders, whose avarice hath exhausted his country and enslaved his kindred.

This general opinion of all nations, that judgment will certainly be executed hereafter, is further strengthened by the sense that each individual entertains of right and wrong, and the conviction he feels of being accountable for his actions. No man is without a monitor in his bosom, which never fails to reproach him when he commits a crime, and to applaud and encourage him when he acts uprightly. That there are certain things in their nature fit
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and proper to be done, and certain things which ought to be avoided, or, in other words, that there is such a distinction as good and evil, will hardly be denied: Man, as a reasonable creature, is bound to chuse the one, and to reject the other; and, that he may fulfil this obligation, the Author of existence hath implanted in his mind an abhorrence of vice and a love of virtue; and, although his capacity of discerning between the two extremes may sometimes be obscured by ignorance, or blinded by prejudice, so that he shall not clearly perceive, with respect to the nicer discriminations, where the one ends and the other begins, yet the most uncultivated ignorance, or the most obstinate prejudice, can never wholly destroy his mental perception, and prevent him from discovering the great and essential parts of good and evil. As all men know that there is a difference between right and wrong, so are all sensible that they are, in some measure,

SERM. accountable to a superior Being for the
 VIII. choice they make. Conscience, which is
 as a law to those who have not the law,
 though it may be for a while disregarded,
 can never be wholly extinguished: The
 specious insinuations of the most refined
 casuistry, cannot repress the secret uneasi-
 ness which every man feels who works
 iniquity, nor can the most subtle argu-
 ments of infidelity fully convince him,
 that the flagitious shall always escape un-
 punished.

It hath been the complaint of every age,
 that the eager thirst of happiness, which
 seems congenial with our nature, is never
 gratified. When we enter on the exten-
 sive plain of life, our prospects are wide
 and unbounded; with precipitate haste we
 press forward into the path which seems
 most likely to conduct us to pleasure.
 Festivity and merriment attract the young;
 they chant to the sound of the viol, and the
 tabret,

tabret, and pipe, and wine are in their feasts; but they soon discover that *the heart of fools is in the house of mirth.*—Ambition then allures, and promises to satisfy with that substantial enjoyment which pleasure could not afford; but ambition proves as treacherous as pleasure; and in the evening of their days, jaded with the pursuits, and disgusted with the gratifications of life, they exclaim, *What profit hath a man of all his labour, and of the vexation of his heart, wherein he hath laboured under the sun?* For all his days are sorrow, and his travail grief * 1.—Surely then, since this earth affords no object to satisfy the soul, there is another state of existence to be expected, where that happiness may be found, which here is sought in vain.

The unequal distribution of good and evil, hath too frequently awakened the

* Eccles. ii. 23.

SERM. accountable to a superior Being for the
 VIII. choice they make. Conscience, which is
 as a law to *those who have not the law*, though it may be for a while disregarded, can never be wholly extinguished: The specious insinuations of the most refined casuistry, cannot repress the secret uneasiness which every man feels who works iniquity; nor can the most subtle arguments of infidelity fully convince him, that the flagitious shall always escape unpunished.

It hath been the complaint of every age, that the eager thirst of happiness, which stems congenial with our nature, is never gratified. When we enter on the extensive plain of life, our prospects are wide and unbounded; with precipitate haste we press forward into the path which seems most likely to conduct us to pleasure. Festivity and merriment attract the young; *they chant to the sound of the viol, and the tabret,*

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The unequal distribution of good and evil, hath too frequently awakened the

* Eccles. ii. 23.

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most alarming apprehensions in the minds of the uninstructed, who have, at times, been led to fear that the OMNIPOTENT had abandoned his creatures to their own inventions; that, after having created mankind, he ceased to interfere in their concerns, leaving all things, animate and inanimate, to the direction of chance; and, consequently, that the wickedness of the wicked was suffered to prosper, and the righteousness of the righteous to go unrewarded. Under the oppression of such suspicions, it were natural enough to exclaim, *Surely I have cleansed my heart in vain! I have seen the vicious man in great prosperity, flourishing as a green bay-tree; I have seen the proud exulting in the greatness of his power, and bearing down all opposition; I have seen the virtuous in great adversity, depressed by the weight of severe affliction, groaning under the rod of oppression, or wasting away in lingering disease. But if*

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that

that there is a day of retribution? Is it not a forcible reason to conclude, that, in the next world, if not in this, every one shall receive the due recompence of his works?

Yet arguments like these, however they might be requisite in affording consolation to the philosopher, and in fortifying the mind of an upright heathen, are unnecessary to confirm the hopes of a Christian, who is baptized in the faith of the resurrection from the dead, and the life everlasting. To him Revelation hath held out a lamp, which Philosophy could never display, and guided to a glorious certainty, which logical disquisition could never attain. We are not wandering in unsettled conjecture, or faintly assenting to abstruse reasoning; but convinced, beyond any possibility of doubt, that *as in Adam all die, even so in CHRIST shall all be made alive*. For the

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VIII

the punishment of the first transgressor, his descendants were made subject to dissolution, and one general home was appointed for all the living; but by the obedience of one, those whom he was not ashamed to call his brethren, were redeemed from the curse, and made candidates for felicity eternal.

That hope which animated the virtuous in all ages, is now strengthened and ratified, is now made sure and evident to the Christian, who, with the eye of faith, hath beheld the SAVIOUR *ascending up on high, leading captivity captive.* Before this great event, man looked forward to a future state, yet he looked forward with dubious solicitude; but now the secrets of futurity have been laid open, the grave hath yielded up its dead: He who, in the sight of thousands, expired on the cross, hath returned to life; and we are fully confident, that the

Power

Rewards and Punishments.

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*Power who raised up CHRIST from the dead, shall also quicken our mortal bodies *.*

SERM.

VIII.

We know that we shall arise from the tomb, and we are equally certain that we shall arise to judgment. In that awful day, when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, all that have inhabited this extensive globe shall appear before the throne of HIM who liveth for ever; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; but unto them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed †!—

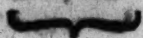
Thus are we assured, by the express declaration of the SON of GOD, that there is

* Rom. viii. 11. † Matt. xxv. 32, &c.

a day

SERM.

VIII



a time appointed in which he shall judge the world. Nor are we left to doubt who shall be punished, and who shall be rewarded: *Ye are blessed*, says our SAVIOUR, *for I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in; naked, and ye clothed me; I was sick; and ye visited me; I was in prison, and ye came unto me: For inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*

Yet although it is thus plainly declared, that the ALMIGHTY will render to every man according to his *deeds*, there is a sect of Christians, whose fundamental doctrine seems directly opposite to this great truth: These mistaken men, like the Jews of old, lay claim to the peculiar favour of Heaven; they call themselves the *elect* of God; they pretend that they are freely justified from their sins, and, having once received grace,
that

that they can never fall.—Their teachers excite the attention of the unthinking multitude by great vehemence of speech and gesture; and, furnishing themselves with a few obscure texts of scripture, the true meaning of which they do not appear to understand, they are ever decrying the obligations of morality. But let no man deceive you with vain words: *He that doeth righteousness, is righteous; whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God* *. The elect of God are they who keep his commandments; they only are justified through CHRIST who obey his laws. The Gospel of the REDEEMER, the writings of his apostles, equally reveal the wrath of Heaven *against all who hold the truth in unrighteousness*; against all who receive the truth, and yet sin against it. As well may the Jew demand justification on account of the merits of the patriarchs, and expect

* 1 John iii. 7—10.

SERM.

VIII.

remission of sin by the external rites of circumcision and burnt-offerings, as the wicked Christian hope for acceptance from the merits of his SAVIOUR and the oblation of the cross, since, *without holiness, no man shall see the LORD* *.

If then there be any truth in the Gospel, if, in us, any hope of salvation, or any fear of destruction, let us *walk soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this present world*, as the only means by which we can obtain the benefit of our SAVIOUR's passion. Let us so pass the *time of our sojourning here in the patient continuance of well doing*, that we may be saved among the remnant of the true Israelites.

Thus, armed with virtue, and directing our thoughts to that existence which He hath promised who cannot deceive, the

* Heb. xii. 14.

disappoint-

disappointments of life shall never harass, the threats of man shall never terrify. Though the inlets to sorrow are so numerous that every one living must feel some part of the general disquiet, yet he will, comparatively, be slightly affected by misfortune, who remembers that the consummation of all things is at hand; that the calamities of this present time are passing away as the morning cloud, which is quickly succeeded by the splendour of a noon-day sun.—Nor shall the idea of death any longer sink the spirits, disturb our tranquillity in the hour of meditation, damp every pleasing sensation in the day of sportive hilarity, and cast a dismal gloom upon each surrounding object. Death, indeed, hurries us from this scene, but it bears us to another; it dissolves all human ties, but it gives birth to new connections; it destroys all mortal pleasures, but it leads to superior enjoyments. He

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that

SERM. that died and rose again hath assured us,
 VIII. that He is gone to prepare a place for his
 faithful disciples, where they shall suffer
 and die no more.

To the wicked, and only to the wicked, the prospect of a future state is a prospect of terrour. Can the criminal delight in the presence of his judge, or anticipate with joy the day of condemnation?—But why will ye perish?—God hath no pleasure in the destruction of the unrighteous. The earthly dispenser of justice cannot listen to the suggestions of pity, and must deliver up the guilty to punishment: But the Heavenly King will hear the cry of penitence, temper judgment with mercy, and freely pardon the relenting sinner.—Cast away, therefore, all your offences, cleanse the guilty hand, and purify the corrupted heart; hear and repent, believe and obey; that *when the LORD himself*

himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, ye may rise to the life immortal, through the merits and mediation of JESUS our LORD and REDEEMER.

SERM.

VIII.

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DANGER OF IMPENITENCE.

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S E R M O N IX.

LUKE xiv. 41.

And when he **ON THE** day, and kept away from the city, and went into the country, he said to his disciples, **ANGER OF IMPERITENCE** day, the things which ye have seen and heard, let them be hid from your eyes.

WHEN men are invited to pursue pleasure, or warned to fly from pain, they stand with willingness, and follow, without hesitation or reluctance, the path which may lead them to enjoyment, or bear them from distress.

S E R M O N IX.

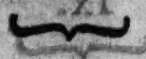
LUKE XIX. 41, 42.

And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.

W H E N men are invited to pursue pleasure, or warned to fly from pain, they attend with willingness, and follow, without hesitation or reluctance, the path which may lead them to enjoyment, or bear them from distress. Little

SERM.

IX.



solicitation will induce the sensualist to partake of the banquet; little entreaty will draw the dissipated into the haunts of public amusement; the force of genius need not be exerted when you would persuade mankind to shun pestilential infection; nor is it requisite to study the graces of elocution, when you exhort them to fly from the uplifted sword. Yet, when Reason would urge us to act according to the dictates of truth and justice, and Religion require us to cleanse our hearts and amend our lives, *though they speak with the tongue of men and angels*, their admonitions are not only disobeyed, but even frequently despised—In vain may virtue call, while none will listen; in vain may Wisdom appeal to the understanding, while Folly hath obscured the faculties of the mind; in vain may the *Sun of righteousness* shine forth, while men love *darkness rather than light*.

This

This obstinate refusal to hear and to reform, which is so visible in the greater part of mankind, appears the more absurd, when it is remembered that Religion offers the same recompense which Pleasure promises. Happiness is held out by both, as the prize to be gained by their respective votaries. In this indeed we find a striking distinction; Pleasure affords a momentary gratification, Religion, a lasting delight. The walks of the former seem smooth and enchanting, but are usually found to terminate in gloom and disappointment: The paths of the latter, though less attractive in their appearance, still increase in beauty the further they are explored, and lead to full and perfect enjoyment: *Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace* *.

Nor is the misery she teaches us to avoid, less formidable, than the reward

* Eccles. iii. 17.

which

SERM.

IX.

which she confers is glorious. The slightest sense of present pain, banishes every pleasing sensation; the dread of approaching evil, prompts us to catch at every slender reed which may save us from the tide of calamity: But when Religion holds up to our view the picture of unending woe and destruction, we turn impatiently away, and lose the tremendous prospect in the levities of the hour.

There is a time when this depravity, in a nation, as well as among individuals, becomes too powerful to be subdued; when the laws and institutions of government are openly violated or secretly evaded, and a general perversion of principles is disseminated through the mass of a people. This hath been commonly occasioned by that influx of wealth which swells the mind with insolence, and that long continuance of uninterrupted prosperity, which leads men to forget the many afflictions to which they

they are exposed, and the many scourges SERME.
with which the universal and all-powerful IX.
Governor hath been compelled to visit a
rebellious and abandoned community.

Jerusalem, the great capital of Judea, was apparently in such a state at the time of our SAVIOUR. Her degenerate children had filled themselves with the various productions of a most fruitful country; they had become covetous and hypocritical, proud and luxurious; devoted to sensuality, or engrossed by avarice, they had neglected the institutions of religion, and the common offices of kindness and humanity.

Their great, though neglected MESSIAH, fully sensible of their enormities, as he approached this city of opulence and vice, *wept over it*; His imagination painted those scenes of distress and terrour which afterwards were presented to the wretched inhabitants, when the Romans
laid

SERM.

IX.

laid waste their fertile fields, consumed their palaces with fire, and put their sons and their daughters to the sword: When *pestilence walked in darkness, and famine wasted in the noon-day.* At the idea of this miserable desolation, the tenderness of his nature melted him into tears. He deplored their blindness, their obstinacy and impenitence: *If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes.*

All those who have departed from their duty, who have trodden under foot the Mediator of the new covenant, and given themselves up to a reprobate mind, are precisely in the same situation with the lost Jerusalem. For them is prepared the *besom of destruction*, and over them must every good and feeling man shed the tear of unavailing sorrow. Their power, or their cunning, will no more avail them in
the

the day of retribution, than its strong walls and bulwarks could defend the Jewish metropolis, when nations encamped before it to level it with the dust. The prophecy was fully accomplished, and *not one stone was left upon another.*

SERM.

IX.

Ever since the beginning of time such powerful representations have been made of the beauty of virtue, and the deformity of vice; of the pleasures which attend the one, and the calamities which await the other; that we may well be surprized at that fatal corruption, which hath, at different periods, overspread the world. Wickedness in all places hath found many followers, but piety hath been attended by an inconsiderable train. Yet, can any country be found where the inhabitants know not that, sooner or later, vice is certain misery? Can any place be pointed out, in which no one hath ever arisen to open the eyes of infatuation, and exhort men to for-

SBRM.

IX.



fake their errors and crimes? Have not prophets and apostles, or moralists and teachers, every where appeared, to call their brethren out of darkness into light, to turn them from folly to wisdom, from perdition to safety and joy? Or, if instructors could be wanting, hath not the conscience of mankind acted as a faithful monitor, declared their duty, and incited them to perform it? Though the heart is prone to ill, forward to betray, and *deceitful above all things*, it hath never been able so far to blind the understanding, as, in material points, to make it receive evil for good, and good for evil. Falsehood hath often worn the semblance of truth, and the crafty and designing have been ever ready to mislead the ignorant; but when did any of us transgress the great laws of reason and religion, without perceiving something which seemed loudly to reproach us? When did any man defraud his neighbour, by false testimony deprive him

him

him of his reputation, steal away the affection of his wife, or treacherously cut him off by the stroke of malice and revenge, without being sensible that he was a villain and a destroyer? When have you neglected any pressing duty, when have you been slow to acknowledge the all-gracious BENEFACTOR, or repulsed with insolence those that had a claim to your compassion, without hearing this judgment pronounced by the warning voice within, *Thou art weighed in the balances and found wanting?* Never was man, to any great degree at least, *ignorantly* flagitious. We do what is forbidden to be done, not that we are unconscious of evil, not that we have heard no invitations to repentance, not that our consciences have ceased to reproach us; but because we will not hear; because we will neither attend to the remonstrance of reason, the preaching of the apostle, nor the call of grace. We are, therefore, like the city our Lord lamented: *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem!*

SERM.

IX.

*Jerusalem! thou that killest the prophets,
and stonest them which are sent unto thee!
How often would I have gathered thy chil-
dren together, even as a hen gathereth her
chickens under her wings, and ye would
not*! But, let the sinner remember, that
on him the same sentence is pronounced:
Behold your house is left unto you desolate.*

The world at present may entice us, its advantages may attract our hopes, and its pains and pleasures divide our attention: But surely the hour will come when different interests shall engage us, and every other idea be lost in the awful expectation of eternity; when the cheerfulness of the gay shall be clouded by the view of mortality; the labours of the busy interrupted by the intrusion of sickness and sorrow, and the delights of the sensual be blasted by the approach of death; when

* Matt. xxiii. 37.

ease and indolence shall be changed into perplexity and tumult, and the shout of merriment into the cry of terrour. The young man may now rejoice in his strength, *and let his heart cheer him in the days of his youth*; he may walk in the ways of his inclination, and follow the dictates of his intemperate passions; *but know thou for all these things God will bring thee into judgment* *. The aged may still cast a lingering eye upon those objects which engrossed him in his younger days; he may still thirst after pleasures he can no longer taste, and defile his imagination with the remembrance of impurity; but know thou the grave is opening to receive thee, and the hour at hand, when *he that is filthy, shall be filthy* for ever.

Much hath been said and written on the efficacy or inefficacy of a death-bed repen-

* Eccles. xi. 9.

N

tance;

SERM.

IX.

tance; but without discussing, at this time, a point so intricate and uncertain, let me ask, whether it is not a kind of madness to trust a matter of such infinite importance as eternal salvation, to the last, melancholy, distracted moments of disease, when attention is divided by the settlement of worldly affairs, the affliction of our dearest friends, and the overpowering agitations of hope and fear. Far be it from any created being rashly to prescribe limits to Divine mercy; but may we not conclude, from reason and from Scripture, that he who hath not repented till the last agonies have overtaken him, he who hath not actually reformed his life, and done every thing in his power to repair the mischiefs his vices have occasioned, will be rejected as a baneful and unprofitable servant? He that hath run on in the career of iniquity till he is stopped short by decrepitude and death, hath surely little to hope, and much to fear.

Would

Would to God, then, that it might be the first and constant care of every Christian, while he is in the prime of life, and the faculties of his soul are in their full vigour, to seek *the things which belong unto his peace!* How wretched is the condition of him, who loiters and procrastinates till all his powers are enfeebled; who begins the task of reformation when he is scarcely able to bear up against the infirmities of a second infancy, and defers the preparation for his journey to the very moment of his departure.

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IX.

Remember, that a period may arrive, when the things which most concern us, the means of acquiring eternal rest and glory, will be *hid from our eyes*: Long indulgence in evil, will make guilt habitual, will at last obliterate the remaining impressions of goodness, and render us totally insensible to the most striking admonitions. To the desperately wicked, Reason

SERM. in vain appeals, and Religion offers her
IX. asylum in vain. Conscience, weary of ineffectual remonstrances, will at last abandon the hardened sinner, and leave him a miserable prey to iniquity and ruin.

How mournful is the thought, that any intelligent being, formed by his beneficent Creator to be good and to be happy, should slight every invitation to grace and favour, till grace is withdrawn, and favour can be sought no more! How dreadful is the idea, that they whom the SON of the HIGHEST died to redeem, should continue deaf to his call, till they are awakened to judgment!

If there are any who can remain unmoved at the danger of impenitence; if there are any who know that fatal levity of heart, which turns the most solemn truths into ridicule; if there are any who can behold with indifference, however faintly

faintly it may be represented, the awful prospect of *the great and terrible day*, to them persuasion will be vain, to them exhortation will be fruitless: We can only deplore their wretched infatuation, and lament that *the things which belong unto their peace are hid from their eyes!*—But if ye are sensible, as surely ye must be, of the misery that awaits the guilty, if your recollection dwells with sorrow and contrition on the follies and enormities of your past lives, if you are willing to become one fold under one Shepherd, and anxious to be received into the new and heavenly Jerusalem, *go, and sin no more.*

It may be regretted, the awful
prospect of the great and terrible day, to
their perdition will be vain, to their
damnation will be fruitless: We can only
deplore their wretched situation, and
lament that the things which they have
done have not yet been forgiven them. But it
is too late, as surely as man's portion
the misery that awaits the guilty, if your
recollection dwells with sorrow and con-
fession on the follies and enormities of
your past life, if you are now to be
come one of the flock of the shepherd, and
subject to be received into the new and
everlasting Jerusalem, go, and be at peace.

ON
BENEVOLENCE.

S E R M O N X.

John iv. 7.

Before, let us love one another, for love is
B E N E V O L E N C E.

THIS epistle of St. John may be called an exhortation to charity, the distinguishing grace and glory of Christianity. When the infirmities of age had rendered this venerable apostle unable to perform the public duties of his ministry, he was constantly led to the church, and only addressed his congregation with this short sentence: "Little children love one another." When at length his hearers were

S E R M O N X.

I JOHN iv. 7.

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is
of God.*

THIS epistle of St. John may be called an exhortation to charity, the distinguishing grace and glory of Christianity. When the infirmities of age had rendered this venerable apostle unable to perform the publick duties of his ministry, he was constantly led to the church, and only addressed his congregation with this short sentence; “ Little children love one another.” When at length his hearers

SERM.
X.

SERM. were weary of this uniform repetition,
 X. and demanded why he always urged the
 same injunction, he replied, "Because it
 "is the command of our Lord, and if
 "ye do nothing else, this alone is suffi-
 "cient."

Love was declared the only essential qualification, since, as we are told by St. Paul, it is *the fulfilling of the law* *. All the obligations we owe to mankind being comprehended in that single virtue, if that can be called a single virtue which is rather a union of many. Let us, then, examine what is meant by *love*, and what are its effects upon human life.

By love, as it is used in Scripture, particularly in the epistle of St. John, may generally be understood extensive charity. Not that species of moral excellence alone

* Rom. xiii. 10.

which

which consists in relieving the necessitous, but unbounded, universal benevolence: SERM.
X.

An ardent desire to promote the welfare and happiness of all around us, to heighten joy, as well as to alleviate distress; *to rejoice with them that rejoice*, as well as to *weep with them that weep*: A willingness to relinquish our own private advantage and gratification for the benefit of others: A promptitude to view the actions of our neighbours in the most favourable light, and to vindicate their conduct from the insinuations of malignity, or the sarcasms of ill-nature: A readiness to forgive and to forget reproach, neglect, and injury; to forbear retaliation, even on those whose enmity is irreconcilable; and, on the contrary, to *overcome evil by good*. This is to love our neighbour as ourself: This is to fulfil the law.

We will first consider that branch of our duty, which teaches us to pardon and relieve an enemy.

To

SERM.

X.

To *blefs them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you*, may at first appear an elevation of virtue beyond the attainment of humanity. When the mind is mortified by the contempt of pride, stung by the suggestions of malice, or wounded by the coldness of ingratitude, we naturally recur to the cause of our sufferings, and desire, in the first bitterness of passion, to inflict sorrow for sorrow. But were this eagerness in returning evil indulged to the utmost, the world would become a theatre of war. We all undergo pain or inconvenience from the baseness or folly of others; every one, therefore, hath something to revenge; and should each of us pursue, with the unremitting ferocity of hatred, the brother that injures or offends, peace, order, and decency, would *make themselves wings, and fly away as eagles toward heaven*; all ties and connections by which men are held together, would be broken; wild confusion and ungovernable rage would lay waste the earth;

earth ; and man, who boasts himself a rational and intelligent being, would have little other employment than to chase his fellow creatures, and hunt down his prey like the dogs of the forest. Happily, however, for mankind, the gusts of furious anger are commonly transient. Time aids reason and religion, melts obduracy, and softens malignity. In the first moments of disappointment or affliction, human nature must feel and resent ; but to continue obstinately cruel, to refuse admission to every extenuating thought, to shut our ears to persuasion and entreaty, to harden our hearts against every emotion of pity and tenderness, and with rancorous malice to persecute, from day to day, the repentant culprit, is to degrade our nature, to poison our enjoyments, to render ourselves the objects of universal detestation, to become unfit for this world, and most unfit for that which is to come.

The

SERM.

X.

The indignation excited by ingratitude is often the boast of many, and dignified with the name of just resentment; but let it be remembered, that no continued resentment can ever be just. Is it reasonable to expect from others, what is not found in ourselves? Let us suppose that we have heaped as great obligations upon any individual, as it is possible for one human being to confer upon another; yet, what is the good he hath received from us, in comparison of that which we have received from the Giver of all good? From Him who creates, who feeds, who preserves, who redeems us? Every act of disobedience to His commands, every omission of negligence, or delay of indolence, is a more flagrant breach of the law of gratitude, than can be made by the basest desertion of friendship between man and man. And who can say that he hath not offended? Who can declare that to his Maker he owes nothing, that he hath discharged

every debt, and will rigorously exact all that is due to him from his fellow creatures? When we are uniformly grateful to our Creator, we may require uniform gratitude from our brethren; but while we have need of mercy, we must beware of demanding justice.

SERM.

X.

Let us now take a general view of that philanthropy which is the characteristick of a Christian, opposed to that misanthropy which constitutes a murderer: *Whoſeever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him* *.

A murderer, we need not be told, is one who, to gratify ſome paſſion, robs another of that being which no power can reſtore. He is juſtly called the peſt of ſociety; he is ſhunned by all, from a principle of ſelf-

* 1 John iii. 15.

preservation,

SERM.

X.

preservation, as well as from an abhorrence and detestation of his crime; and his life is forfeited by divine and human laws; for, *who so sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed* *. He that hateth his brother, is one who destroys the peace of his fellow creatures; one who, perhaps, from no hope of advantage, but merely to indulge a baneful disposition, robs another of that comfort, serenity, and cheerfulness, which constitute our chief happiness: He too is justly called the pest of society; he is shunned by all as a common enemy. The murderer deprives us of life; the misanthrope of that, without which life is scarcely desirable: In this only they differ; the murderer is rooted out from the nation as a noxious weed; the misanthrope is suffered to continue, a destructive poison, embittering all the sweets of social union.

* Genesis ix. 6.

It hath been well observed, that the felicity or misery of our present existence arises not from great and unexpected events. Mankind are seldom made happy by the sudden acquisition of wealth and honour, nor by the attainment of any object they have eagerly pursued. Neither are they rendered lastingly miserable by the loss of large possessions, or the pressure of great and overwhelming calamity. Whatever is violent, is of short duration: The effusions of tumultuous delight, and the bursts of agonizing grief, soon subside, and make but a small sum in the estimate of the joys and sorrows of mortality. Our prevailing tranquillity or disquietude is occasioned by a combination of things apparently trivial. The cheering smile of benevolence, the alacrity of good-nature to aid and to amuse, and the constant intercourse of kind offices, fill the breast with a pleasing and regular composure, which leaves no room for uneasiness and disgust;

O

while

SERM. while the peevishness of discontent, the cap-
X. tious readiness of ill-humour to tease and
to perplex, the stubborn contentions of
obstinacy, the insolence of conscious supe-
riority, and the perpetual series of unkind
offices, gradually sour the temper, damp
all the warm and generous feelings of the
soul, and create an habitual dislike for
the world. Thus, as mutual affection, or
love, is the chief spring of human pleasure,
mutual dislike or hatred is the chief source
of human wretchedness. The hater of his
brother, therefore, is a destroyer of the
common welfare. Like the enemy, who
planted tares in the soil where uncorrupt-
ed seed had been sown, he is vigilant to
confound good and evil, and anxious to
prevent virtue from arriving at its proper
growth, by choking it with weeds, or en-
tangling it with briars.

Nor is the cultivation of placid disposi-
tions only necessary to render us useful
and

and agreeable to society at large, since it is SERM.
indispensably requisite in the nearer rela- X.
tions and more intimate connections of
life. That felicity which is frequently
observed among those who are united by
the most sacred of all engagements, pro-
ceeds oftener from habits of benevolence,
early acquired and constantly cherished,
than from the mere force of mutual at-
tachment. Friendship of every kind is
built upon esteem; but it must be sup-
ported by a succession of reciprocal obli-
gations, by gentleness, kindness, and un-
varied exertions to please. How shall the
man, who is a stranger to mildness and
humanity, acquire the enchanting arts of
soothing tenderness, and make himself the
centre of domestick regard? The bias, for
we can scarcely call it affection, which in-
clines him to one particular object, will
for a while, perhaps, be a curb to his na-
ture; but this check will soon be lost.
He finds the individual he hath singled

SERM. out, subject to the common frailties of
 X. mortality, and perhaps to some peculiar
 weaknesses. He hath never learned to
 view the blemishes of others in a favourable light; he hath never learned to overlook slight offences, and pardon venial errors; to bear with patience the tediousness of casual garulity, the petulance of temporary passion, or the trifling of occasional levity. He grows peevish, discontented, clamorous; blind to the virtues, but eagerly attentive to the faults of his companion. Perpetual vexation who can quietly endure? His ill-humour is at length returned; slight is repaid with slight, reproach with reproach, injury with injury, and contempt with contempt.

But, turning aside from this unpleasant scene, let us view the different conduct of those who have been accustomed to the exercise of good-will. When their general
 desire

desire of promoting happiness, is increased by a particular attachment, every look, every action, will be an instrument to convey delight: Life glides away almost in perpetual serenity; for, though accidental care, or accidental grief, should, for a moment, cloud the prospect, the sympathy and tenderness of watchful benevolence soothes and alleviates every distress, and removes half the burden of calamity.

SERM.

X.

If to arguments like these it can possibly be objected, that, although very proper in a school of morality, they are not sufficiently connected with religion to be urged to a society of Christians; if such a suggestion can arise in the mind of any, let it be remembered, that it is one great aim of the Gospel to enforce the duties of private life, and render us, in every connection, *kindly affectionate*.—*Husbands love your wives, and be not bitter against them,* said the teacher of the Gentiles: *Husbands*

SERM.

K.

dwell with your wives according to knowledge, said that apostle upon whom CHRIST declared he would *build his Church*; and He himself, the Author and Finisher of our faith, assured us, *by this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another* *. Thus establishing good-will to our fellow-creatures as the great test of his religion.

What indeed can be more worthy the PRINCE OF PEACE and MERCIFUL SAVIOUR, than the injunction of that virtue which promotes the welfare of the universe. Benevolence increases good, and lessens evil: With the fortunate it exults, with the afflicted it mourns; it gives food to the hungry, and raiment to the naked; it affords protection to the weak, and counsel to the ignorant; it binds up the wounds of the stranger, and breaks the

* John xiii. 35.

chain

chain of the captive. Benevolence is a SERM.
father to the orphan, a husband to the wi- X.
dow, a champion to the oppressed, and a }
friend to all. It checks the quick reply,
and arrests the uplifted arm; its lips dis-
til gentleness, and its hand disseminates
joy. Unawed by superstition, and un-
tainted by prejudice, it casts an eye of be-
nignity upon every party. Disregarding
the rules of a narrow policy, it scorns to
be confined within the boundaries of a
nation; to every kindred, and language,
and people, it bears the olive, and where-
ever it beholds a man, it welcomes a bro-
ther.

Thus have we seen the necessity of cul-
tivating this Christian grace, as it con-
cerns the common tranquillity, and the
comfort and felicity of our nearest friends.
It is equally requisite to our own peace
as individuals. No one can escape infec-

SERM: tion while he is scattering pestilence: He
 XX that hates others, will himself be hated;
 he that surveys his brother with maligni-
 ty, cannot expect to be viewed with kind-
 ness, and without kindness who would
 live? Can any one be happy by himself?
 Yet the misanthrope must fly from socie-
 ty, and pine in a state of alienation from
 mankind.
 The malevolent is constantly waging
 war against all his species: Easily provok-
 ed, but not easily appeased; disdaining to
 give or to receive pleasure, he stalks sul-
 lenly through life, disowning and disown-
 ed. As a father, or a husband he may be
 feared, but he never will be loved. If he
 is successful, no one rejoices; if he is
 in distress, no one laments. When he is
 stretched upon the bed of sickness, no tear
 of sympathy falls upon his pillow, no voice
 of tenderness soothes his pain. The bit-
 terness

terness of his spirit overflows upon him-
self, and he dies despised by the world,
and unprepared for heaven. SERM.
X.

The benevolent, esteemed and caressed,
finds in every connection an increase of
comfort and joy. He is obeyed with cheer-
fulness, and loved with ardour: His pro-
perity is considered as a general blessing,
his adversity is deplored as a general mis-
fortune. When disease weighs him down,
the hand of affection strives to sustain him;
tender assiduity watches by his couch, and
anticipates every wish. The prayers of the
good attend him; and at length, when his
appointed time is come, his memory is
honoured upon earth, and his soul as-
cends to the habitations of eternal love.

As a further inducement to cherish this
comprehensive excellence, if any further
inducement can be wanting, let us consi-
der the unmerited and unbounded goodness

of

SERM. of our all-merciful CREATOR: He *pitieth*
X. *us as a father pitieth his own children; he*
sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust,
and is kind even to the unthankful. All
 creatures bear the impression of his bene-
 ficence; it pervades the globe, and extends
 through the unknown and immeasurable
 universe. So great was his paternal affec-
 tion for his unworthy, his degenerate off-
 spring, *that he gave his only begotten Son,*
that whosoever believeth in him should not
perish, but have everlasting life. And how
 obvious, how forcible is the inference of
 the apostle, *Beloved, if God so loved us,*
we ought also to love one another *. Let us
 remember, that our eternal, is inseparably
 connected with our temporal happiness;
 for ill-will, malice, and cruelty, can qua-
 lify us only for the society of fiends;
 good-will, forgiveness, and humanity, for
 the companions of angels and the spirits
 of the just.

* 1 John iv. 7.

Love is of God: Love is an emanation from the Divinity: He is the glorious luminary that kindles in our hearts the bright and generous flame. Of Him, then, the origin of all perfection, let us implore this most excellent gift of charity; the tie of friendship, the cement of society, the aggregate of virtue, and the passport to glory.

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X.

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DAVID'S REPLY TO DAVID.

ON

BARZILLAI'S REPLY TO DAVID.

S E R M O N XI

II. SAMUEL XIX. 32.

O N

I am this day fourscore years old, and can I
discern between good and evil? Can the
servant taste what I eat or what I drink?
Can I hear any more the voice of singing
men and singing women? Wherefore then
should thy servant be yet a burden unto my
Lord the King?

ALTHOUGH we are placed upon
this globe to mortify our evil and
corrupt affections, and become worthy of a
more glorious habitation; although we are
but strangers travelling to our home, the

S E R M O N XI.

ii. SAMUEL xix. 35.

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ALTHOUGH we are placed upon this globe to mortify our evil and corrupt affections, and become worthy of a more glorious habitation; although we are but strangers travelling to our home, the path

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path we tread is sometimes smooth and flowery; many a delight hath the hand of Infinite Goodness scattered in the way, to comfort and refresh the wearied pilgrim. All the senses are instruments of pleasure; the eye is charmed with objects of beauty, the ear is soothed with notes of melody, and the taste is gratified with inexhaustible variety from the animal and vegetable world. Still greater and more substantial satisfaction results from the affections of the mind. Man does not pursue his course in gloomy solitude; each individual sees numberless companions proceeding in the same track, from whom he may select spirits congenial with his own; he may form many connections, which awaken all the finer feelings of the heart, and raise him to a state of temporary felicity. But as this earth is not our seat of rest, all earthly gratifications must, after a while, be resigned; if, by our unexpected removal to another scene, they are not suddenly lost to us, we become

become at length lost to *them*; the powers of enjoyment fail, and old age, like the breath of winter, benumbs the senses and congeals the blood. The heart grows cold and torpid, and receives no longer the impressions of gaiety.

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Such, at least, was the conviction of Barzillai, the Gileadite; a personage of considerable rank and power, who had furnished David and his army with sustenance while they lay at Mahanaim. When Absalom and his party were defeated, and the king returned in peace, Barzillai went down from the city where he dwelt, to conduct his sovereign over Jordan; and, as a reward for the loyalty and attention he had manifested, this faithful subject was invited to accompany his royal master to Jerusalem, and partake the splendour and luxuries of a court. But the Gileadite, sensible of his infirmities and approaching

P dissolution,

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diffolution, replied, *How long have I to live, that I should go up with the king unto Jerusalem? I am this day fourscore years old, and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? Can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women? Wherefore then should thy servant be yet a burden unto my lord the king?*

This passage of sacred history may suggest the following inquiries: Whether this incapacity of enjoyment was peculiar to Barzillai, or common to old age; and, whether he did wisely in declining the recompense which David offered him, and desiring to return to his own city, that he might be buried in the grave of his fathers? If it shall be found that he answered well, and that all men who arrive at the same date, must expect the same corporeal decay, we may then ask, with all

due humility, why hath the Father of mercies passed this decree, So long shall thy gratifications continue and no longer?

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We will first, then, examine if Time be the enemy of pleasure, and if life, after we have numbered *four score years*, be then, for its little remainder, *but labour and sorrow?*

Man may be considered as a machine, and though of the most exquisite workmanship, liable, like any other machine, to a thousand irregularities and disorders, even while its springs are yet strong, and many of its parts entire; but if it escape these accidents, which may damage or destroy it long before the term of its usual duration, it must, at last, wear away and perish.—During the period to which our species is generally confined, hope and fear, grief and joy, occasionally fill the bosom; but when we pass the common

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boundary of nature, as the bodily organs are impaired, which convey sensation to the mind, the faculties become dead, and the soul incapable of perception. The young, to use the figurative language of Solomon, pluck *the rose of Sharon, and the lilly of the vallies*; they sit down under the shade of the almond tree; the blossom is fair to the sight, and the fruit is sweet to the taste: But the season is at hand, when the blossom shall be no longer fragrant, and the fruit shall ripen in vain. The young *come leaping upon the mountains* with the swiftness of the roe, and call to their chosen companions, in the strain of exultation, *The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land*: But the hour approaches, when the eye shall see these things no more, and the ear be dull of hearing. Nature blooms in vain to the blind, and harmony sounds in vain to the deaf,

deaf. The evil days must soon arrive, TERM.
 when thou shalt say of every earthly good, XI.
I have no pleasure in them—When the keep-
ers of the house shall tremble, and the strong
men shall bow themselves, and the grinders
cease, because they are few, and those that
look out of the windows be darkened.*

Ask him, whom you observe bowed down with decrepitude, and tottering on the verge of the grave, if life hath any thing yet in store, for which he can reasonably wish to live. The delights of sense have forsaken him, the delights of the imagination fail. Place before him the most delicate viands, he cannot now distinguish their exquisite flavour; present him with the richest wines, they will gladden his heart no more; lead him to the top of an eminence which commands the extended plain, point out the wealth

* Eccles. xii. 3.

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and plenty of the vale, the flocks and herds, the fields and villages, the cities and palaces; his sight is dim, the variegated landkip he cannot discern. Collect the fairest flowers and the richest odours; to him the perfumes of Arabia have lost their scent. Endeavour to exhilarate his drooping spirit with concord and melody; let *the damsels appear playing with the timbrels*, let them *sing to the stringed instruments*; let the musician strike the harp, and try if he can expel uneasiness and languor, as David refreshed the soul of Saul: By him, whom cold insensibility hath seized, the softer notes are unheard, and the louder are considered as harsh and discordant: *the mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth* *. Will he join in the race with the swift, or draw the bow with the strong? His limbs are feeble, and his nerves relaxed, and exercise

* Isaiah xxiv. 8.

and

and sports can no longer engage.—Since then he derives little satisfaction from the objects that surround him, and is unable to fill up the heavy hours with active recreation, will you ask if he can look into his own mind and extract amusement from himself? Even this resource is denied him: His memory, faint and imperfect, cannot trace the past events of his life, and sooth him with the recollection of pleasure; his imagination, dull and confused, cannot wander from scene to scene, and present, to the intellectual eye, distinct images of absent or invisible objects; his fancy, cold and inert, cannot enrich him with new ideas, nor kindle the glow of animation:—The whole soul is disordered, and all its energy is fled.

But should we enquire of those who are exempt from this total debility, whose memories are still fresh, and whose bodily or-

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gans still perform their functions, we shall find but little to make us solicitous for longevity. Regret embitters the past, melancholy darkens the future; they have experienced the folly of pursuit, they have experienced the emptiness of possession; their chosen friends have dropped away one after another, and left them lonely in the midst of society. New customs have been established, to which they are strangers; new forms and attentions must be studied, which they cannot readily learn. The casual vexations of the hour grow up into serious evils; they are distressed by the noise of the giddy, and irritated by the impertinence of the frivolous. Nothing is perceived on which the weary soul securely rests: They cannot flatter themselves with the prospect of distant years, and the hope of many good things yet in store; the grave is the immediate prospect before them, and a future state their only hope.

We

We may sometimes, indeed, observe a singular instance of vigorous and cheerful old age. A few there are, who enjoy the peculiar blessing of strength of body and serenity of mind, at a period when their contemporaries are falling into dejection and dotage. A few there are, whose corporeal and mental powers remain unimpaired, like the wheels of a well-constructed engine, till they all fail together, and every part stops at once. But so rare are these exceptions, that they always attract our admiration as something out of the common course of nature, and will not, therefore, at all affect the general position, that life, protracted beyond a certain point, is infirmity and pain.

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This being admitted, we surely need not hesitate to determine, that Barzillai answered wisely; for, when he could no longer taste what he eat or what he drank, why should he seek to partake the luxuries

of

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of a royal table? When he could no longer hear the voice of singing men or of singing women, why should he enter into the hall of music, and sit inattentive to the lute and the song? The King would have augmented the wealth of his servant, and honoured him with titles of dignity; but of what use are riches to him, who cannot relish the advantages which riches procure? Or what benefit can he derive from title and eminence, in whom the flame of ambition is extinguished? The Gileadite, then, did surely well, in resigning these things to the young and the busy, and returning in quiet to his own city.

But some, perhaps, will say, why hath not that good and gracious Being, who gave us the capacities of enjoyment, permitted them to last invariably till we drop into the tomb? Why hath He, who is as kind and bountiful as He is just and powerful, marked our concluding years with

with feebleness and folly, and damped the ardour of the young, by shewing them, exemplified in their fathers, that length of days is length of sorrow?—Let him, in whose breast questions like these may arise, recollect what hath been so often repeated, that we live here, only that we may be fit to live hereafter; and to the interests of that futurity it would, doubtless, be highly prejudicial, were human life, in compliance with our fond wishes, no longer mutable and vain.

Let us suppose that all those things, which even now allure and charm us, were substantial and permanent; should we not seek them with still greater avidity, and sacrifice still more to obtain them? Would the feeble sense of moral rectitude, would even the incitements of religion, be sufficient to repress the impulse of desire? Should we ever think of the *night when*

SERM. *no man can work* ? Should we ever learn to
 XI. prepare for judgment ? But now, since we
 see that all around us is emptiness and va-
 nity; that man is born to trouble, to la-
 bour, and to disgust; that the hour will
 soon overtake us, when *all the daughters of*
musick shall be brought low, the grasshopper
be a burden, and desire fail *; we are, in some
 measure, weaned from this vale of tears, and
 induced to look forward to that abiding
 home, where grief, and languor, and imbe-
 cility shall cease, and perpetual strength,
 youth, and joy, accompany us to the end
 of time.

We may further observe, that as the
 gratifications we experience here, are to-
 tally unlike those we are to experience
 hereafter, it is highly necessary that we
 should lose our relish for what is thus pe-

* Eccles. xii. 45.

culiar and local. The inheritance which CHRIST promises to his followers, is not like the sensual paradise of the Arabians, nor the elysian fields of the Heathen: They who shall be welcomed with the happy title of *good and faithful servants*, are not to lie down on beds of flowers, breathing aromatic gales, and indulging their palates with delicious fruits, lulled to slumber by falling waters, and awakened by the warbling of birds. These are earthly delights, these are the pleasures of men; and may we not then conclude, that to these we are rendered insensible, even before we are called from this globe, that the soul may be open to the reception of felicity more pure, more durable, and more exalted?

From what hath been urged, the aged may be led to remember, that they should decline the festivity of a crowded circle, and fly with abhorrence from the haunts
of

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of vice. Nothing can be more unnatural than a dissipated, nothing more contemptible than an immoral old man. If grey hairs be honourable when accompanied with sobriety and goodness, they are a shame and a reproach when united with levity and wickedness. Truly deplorable is the condition of him, who, after a youth of intemperance and sensuality, feels the weakness of age stealing upon him, while his passions remain impure and vehement; who reviews his sins, not with contrition that they have been committed, but with regret that they can be committed no more, and is thirsting to be vicious without the power; who crawls to the grave a spectacle of wretchedness and guilt, and sees it closing over him while he is an alien to virtue and to God.—Let all who have entered into the paths of unrighteousness, stop short ere they advance too far, and be sedulous to reform ere reformation be hopeless.—*There is a sin unto death.*—Let those
who

who have numbered many years subdue their remaining desires, compose their minds by meditation and prayer, and turn their thoughts and wishes towards that existence upon which they are just entering. With them *the night is far spent, the day is at hand*. But let them not withdraw from society in moody dejection; they should rather retire with content and cheerfulness, in the thought that they have run their race, and shall soon obtain the invaluable prize; let them not relinquish the advantages of the world with tardy unwillingness; they should rather throw them aside with alacrity, as a man casts away the toys and trifles of his childhood.

The young may learn not to set so high a value, as they generally do, upon the pleasures of sense, and the distinctions of fortune: While their views are extensive,
and

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and their hopes ardent, they will, in some measure, be occupied by the objects that surround them ; it is natural, it is reasonable that they should. As long as we are mortals, we must pay some regard to the concerns of mortals.—Religion, when it assures us that *all is vexation of spirit*, does not exhort the labourer to forsake the tillage of his field, or the noble to degrade himself from his rank, and consume his days in the gloom of a cloister. Religion, when it requires us *to pass the time of our sojourning here in fear* *, does not command us to abjure all the innocent amusements of temperate gaiety. It only entreats us not to provide, with such restless solicitude, for the wants of this fleeting abode, to the loss of that glory which shall be revealed hereafter. Religion speaks *as unto wise men* ; it reminds us, that the sorrows and comforts of this varied stage are mo-

* 1 Peter i. 17.

mentary,

mentary, the punishments and rewards of a future state, eternal; and appeals to our reason, whether it is not as much our interest, as our duty, to *abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul**. Were these things duly weighed by those who are in the vigour of youth, they would not pursue, with such eagerness, what is thus prejudicial to their lasting repose, and what, even here, their declining faculties will not long permit them to enjoy.

Such, then, is the appointed condition of human kind. After many hours and years of care, they arrive at that season, when *they grope in the dark without light, and stagger like a drunken man†*. But when the miseries and burdens of mortality are considered, let us be careful to distinguish the voice of sober meditation from the murmur of sullen discontent. The

* 1 Peter ii. 11.

† Job xii. 25.

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Disposer of every thing here below, is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works*; and it is as much our duty and our wisdom to bless him for that which he denies, as for that which he grants. *The Father of mercies and God of all comforts* is not a doting parent who gives from inconsiderate fondness, nor an arbitrary ruler who takes away from capricious tyranny. He, and He only, *discerneth both time and judgment*, and to our wants and weaknesses He proportions his just and wise dispensations. *He scourgeth every son whom he receiveth*; not that he delights to inflict pain, but that we may *be partakers of his holiness*†. Nothing is more absurd than to suppose, as is often supposed, that he who declaims upon the vanity of life and the emptiness of enjoyment, declaims against the goodness of his Maker. To say that this is not a state of felicity, is only to say, what no one

* Psalm cxlv. 17.

† Heb. xii. 10.

will

will deny, that this globe is not paradise, that earth is not heaven. Here we are strangers and sojourners, not fixed and settled inhabitants. As well might the traveller expect to find the road, through which he is passing to his home, every where strewn with flowers, screened from the sun, and sheltered from the rain, as man to find the path he now treads uniformly pleasant. As well might the sailor hope to have the sea perpetually calm, over which he sails to a distant climate: the wind may sometimes blow too roughly, and toss with violence his slender bark; but without that wind, which will occasionally stir up the tempest, how can he be wafted to the haven whither he is bound?

Adversity is the portion of him *that is born of a woman*; but adversity is surely necessary: Yet, did we steadily pursue the great end of our being, how unimportant would all our sufferings appear! Is not

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this

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this the most fruitful source of vexation, disappointment, and bitterness of spirit, that we are constantly thirsting and searching for happiness, in a place where it never can be found? If, on this stage of turbulence and confusion, we are, for the most part, easy and tranquil, it is surely as much as we should reasonably expect. We can only be absolutely *happy*, in the society of angels, and in the presence of God.

But though it be acknowledged that man is subject to many griefs which he can neither cause nor cure, he may always find ample consolation in this conviction, that *when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life**. Though he be here the prey of debility and dissolution, he shall arise to decline and to die no more. Beyond all the changes of this mortal dwelling, beyond the tomb which receives our

* James i. 12.

corruptible

corruptible bodies, beyond the clouds and darkness which now overshadow us, may he who hath grown old in piety direct his aspiring sight. The corporeal eye can indeed only range over the material world, but the mental eye can pierce the starry firmament, and explore those glorious regions which faith and hope display. Thither, where no satiety disgusts, let us wing our ardent wishes, and lift up our hearts in grateful adoration to that all-ruling Providence, which conducts us through the vale of dimness and sorrow, to the mansion of light and happiness.

SERM.

XI.

On the Nature of the Soul

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ON THE
KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

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S E R M O N XII.

L U K E xii. 32.

*Fear not little flock, for it is your Father's
good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

NO one, capable of reflection, ever engaged in any pursuit but with a view to the end.—The peasant breaks the clod, and scatters the seed, that in due season he may reap the fruit; the trader mixes in the fatigue and vexations of business, that he may increase his substance, and provide a fund for the winter of age; the student devotes his nights to meditation, and his days to literary labour, explores

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XII.



SERM.

XII.

plores the records of antiquity, and the pages of modern science, that he may store his mind with knowledge, and raise himself to eminence. Nothing, perhaps, is undertaken for the pleasure it affords in itself, the effect it may produce is the leading inducement.

But while we are attentive to the consequence of our actions here, we forget the great purpose for which we were called into being. Wherefore was man endowed with faculties so comprehensive, and animated by a spirit sublime and aspiring? Why was he placed upon a spacious globe, made superior to the animal creation, and furnished with passions to stimulate, and reason to guide him? Surely not to toil through fourscore years, and then return to the earth and perish: Surely not to confine his wishes to the fading, unsatisfactory pleasures of a day, and depart into everlasting darkness, with the melancholy conclusion

clusion that *all is vanity*. For higher views, for more substantial joys, for nobler ends were his nostrils filled with the breath of life. Inferior creatures were appointed for his use, to feed, to clothe, or to serve him, and, after a while, to be dissolved and to appear no more; but the human race were formed to live for ever: *God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of his own eternity* *.

Our blessed LORD, who hath established this glorious conviction upon a sure and immoveable foundation, exhorts his followers neither to dread the persecutions of their adversaries, nor to be anxious for the advantages of the world. Our present afflictions are transient, and even our present happiness *consisteth not in abundance*. Why, then, should the threats of men alarm, or the prospect of wealth allure?

* Wisd. ii. 23.

SERM. The necessaries of food and raiment shall
XII. be supplied by Him who distributes plenty to the fowls of the air; and for the rest,
Fear not,—it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Let us consider what is the nature of that kingdom which is here promised to the primitive believers, and whether those who now embrace the Gospel, have any title to the same reward.

His first disciples expected from CHRIST the restoration of that secular dominion, which the Jewish tribes, in general, so impatiently desired; and, in consequence of this assurance, we find the apostles contending, upon different occasions, who among them should be the greatest; nor did they resign these hopes of beholding their leader on the throne of David, and of raising themselves to the summit of earthly grandeur, till long intercourse with
their

their divine Master had taught them that his *kingdom was not of this world*, and the renovation of their hearts and affections had inspired them with brighter expectations of *an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled*. Long were they unwilling to believe, that he who restored the dead to life, should himself be subject to mortality, and that his followers, like him, should be *despised and rejected of men*; but, at length, instructed by his precepts, and strengthened by his example, they bore with patience the scorn and mockery of their nation, the persecutions of the Gentiles, and the hatred of mankind; and, only attentive to *the joy that was set before them*, they welcomed the sword, the stake, and the cross, regardless of the torture, and *despising the shame*.

No Christians, therefore, must look forward to the distinctions of mortal greatness as the reward of their obedience: The
prize

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prize for which they contend, is not present but future; the crown to which they aspire, is not temporal but eternal. They must relinquish unlawful pleasures and ambitious views; they must endure the miseries of this probationary state, and pass through *the valley of the shadow of death*, before they can arrive at the habitations of glory.

What those habitations are, the curiosity of man may in vain endeavour to discover; though almost every people have indulged their fancy in drawing loose and imperfect sketches of the invisible world. Some have represented the mansion of the blessed, as a beautiful and fertile garden; while others have supposed that, in paradise, every object they wish to behold shall immediately present itself to their view. Such conjectures, however, derive their origin from nothing but the wild chimeras of visionary mortals: Even
we,

we, upon whom the light of revelation hath shone, can determine nothing with precision concerning the peculiar felicity of departed spirits. Imagination may delight herself with a thousand idle speculations, but no eye can pierce that impenetrable veil, which conceals the kingdom of heaven from the inhabitants of earth.

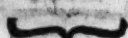
SERM.

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It hath, however, been generally believed, that, although the Deity is every where present, and essentially pervades the immeasurable universe; yet there is one region in which he more particularly dwells, and even visibly appears on the throne of his glory, surrounded by innumerable hosts of angels. To this bright abode, it is asserted, the souls of the virtuous will be conveyed, and continue, to all eternity, employed in singing psalms of praise and adoration to their Creator. This opinion seems well supported by many texts of scripture; but how far such passages are to be

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be literally understood, it were surely vain to inquire.

Some have conceived an idea, that when they are freed from this corruptible body, they shall have liberty to range from planet to planet, trace out the remotest star, and explore the whole circle of creation: That their faculties will be thus continually enlarged, and that every acquisition of knowledge will be an acquisition of happiness. But let it suffice us to be convinced, that wherever we may be situated, or however we may be employed, we shall experience the *fulness of joy*.

There are scarce any who do not sooth themselves with the thought of meeting in another world their former associates, and being again united to those who were most dear to them on earth; whose social gaiety enlivened the hours of leisure, and whose tender endearments alleviated the pains of sickness.

sickness. So pleasing a persuasion who would not wish to indulge? Yet we cannot suppose that, among spirits, a renewal of connections can take place, which were adapted to men; which were formed by a sense of mutual wants and dependence, and cemented by passions that will hereafter be extinguished: *The children of this world marry, and are given in marriage; but they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage* *.

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This does not, however, afford any ground to affirm, that we shall no more behold our departed friends, but only that we cannot be united to them in the same manner: *There are celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial; but as the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial another, so the sensations of the celestial*

* Luke xx. 34, 35.

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must

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must be totally different from the sensations of the terrestrial. That which calls for protection and sympathy from its species, when it is *sown in weakness*, cannot need the same support when it is *raised in power**.

Yet without society we can have no conception of felicity; a solitary, must always be a miserable being; and we are expressly assured, that the souls of the righteous shall be assembled together, and compose an innumerable company: but what will be their particular employment, what connections will be established among them, what remembrance they may have of their former thoughts and actions, or in what their happiness will consist, is totally unknown, and probably will for ever remain unknown to mortal man. It is, indeed, most reasonable to conclude, that it never

* 1 Cor. xv. 43.

can be revealed to man, unless he were endowed with other faculties, and his nature wholly changed. He hath now no image impressed upon his mind but what is derived from the objects around him; no sensation of delight which does not, in some measure, owe its power of giving pleasure to bodily organs; no just conception of a spirit divested of corporeal substance: How then can imagination paint those scenes, of which no eye hath beheld any kind of similitude? Or how can language describe those pleasures, which are independent of all bodily sensation, and adapted to beings, of whose nature we can form no adequate idea?

It hath been said, that a clear revelation of the region of eternal light is refused to mankind, because the overpowering splendour of that abode would so dazzle and absorb their senses, that, to the concerns of life, they could no longer attend: But

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surely it were sufficient to say that it *is not*, because it *cannot* be discovered; though the eye could see, and the ear hear, it were all in vain, while the heart could not conceive.

Speculations, like these, may perhaps amuse the inquirer who delights to wander in the wild regions of fancy, but can never dispel any degree of that darkness, which our present imperfection of intellect renders wholly impervious. And, indeed, what could be gained, were it possible to attain more precise ideas of the peculiar happiness of immortals? We already know, with certain assurance, that there is a state of perfect bliss, though we know not in what that bliss will consist; we know that there is a kingdom of eternal glory, though the nature of that glory we cannot ascertain.

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The Almighty hath revealed all that was necessary, and, perhaps, all that was possible for us to understand. He hath declared, that the general persuasion of every people is not a vain and flattering illusion; that after death hath snatched us from this temporary dwelling, we shall enter upon another existence, not diversified with hope and fear, grief and joy, but unchangeably miserable, or unchangeably happy.

The most striking difference we can observe between the gratifications of the mortal and the immortal state, is this: Here the delight we experience consists in pursuit; in the world of spirits, it will consist in actual possession. All that now attracts desire and rouses us to industry, affords little satisfaction when it is once acquired; new objects perpetually appear; one after another is pursued with the same unabated eagerness, till attainment renders the last as insipid as the first: Thus

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is the airy chace continued to the close of our days ; we still imagine that although we have been hitherto in search of a phantom, we shall at last find the substance ; without recollecting that man is formed for action, and that life is a burden to him who hath not something constantly in view to kindle expectation and stimulate diligence. But, in the *new heavens and the new earth*, no objects of competition will arise to excite our wishes ; where there is no further prize to be gained, there can be no contest ; where there is no satiety, there can be no need of successive changes ; pursuit will cease in universal attainment, attainment will satisfy by conferring compleat felicity. No mixture of evil shall allay the good, no dread of the future disturb the tranquillity of the present ; unmingled delight shall occupy the whole soul, and that delight shall be unalterable and eternal. When thousands of years are past, and millions of ages have rolled

rolled away, if there can then be any distinction of time, the glorious thought will still recur, that though the sun hath ceased to shine, and the stars have dropped from their orbits, though earth and heaven have passed away, yet the joys of the celestial hierarchy, like the word of the ALMIGHTY, shall feel no change, shall find no end.

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Such is the kingdom which OMNISCIENCE hath prepared.—But for whom is it prepared?—Did CHRIST promise this great inheritance only to that *little flock* which first heard the voice of the Shepherd?—Not unto them only, but unto all who *live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour JESUS* *.

* Titus ii. 12, 13.

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The Deliverer of mankind came not to seek and to save an inconsiderable number. He sent not his apostles only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, but commanded them to teach all nations; He is not the propitiation for our sins alone, *but also for the sins of the whole world**: God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation, *he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him†*: Heaven is not the residence of one chosen people, one elected race, but of every kindred, and tongue, and people‡; it is not the abode of one sect of believers, one party of enthusiasts, but *many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham§*, with the patriarchs and the prophets. Nor let us presume to say that the uninstructed, who never heard the

* 1 John ii. 2.

† Rev. v. 9.

‡ Acts x. 34.

§ Matt. viii. 11.

name of CHRIST, shall lose the benefit of his death, and perish through want of knowledge. But this we know, and this is sufficient to influence our lives, the children of disobedience *shall be cast out.*

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If expulsion from the Divine presence will be the certain consequence of vice, who shall dare to be vicious? If happiness, eternal happiness, will be the certain recompense of virtue, who shall neglect to be virtuous? Were he left unassisted and unprotected, man might sometimes esteem his conquest over sin and the world as hopeless and impossible, and resign himself a prey to comfortless despair; but there is a secret arm to lead us through difficulty and danger, to support us when we faint, and to raise us when we fall.

Then *fear not little flock*—Conducted by a SAVIOUR and REDEEMER, how can we err? Sheltered under the wings of
OMNI-

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OMNIPOTENCE, what shall we dread? Sustained by the SPIRIT OF TRUTH, what shall we not resolutely endure? And inspired by the hope of immortality, what shall we not cheerfully resign? *Who shall separate us from the love of CHRIST, who hath given us such great and precious promises? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword*?* Surely neither the sufferings of the present hour, nor the terrour of approaching evil, can shake the constancy of him, who confides in this cheering, this illustrious declaration: *It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.*

• Rom. viii. 35.

On the Kingdom of Heaven.
 Omnipotence, what shall we dread?
 Sustained by the Spirit or Truth, what
 shall we not resolutely endure? And in-
 spired by the hope of immortality, what
 shall we not cheerfully resign? What shall
 separate us from the love of Christ, who

shall give us such great and precious pro-
 mises? Shall we shrink from the light, or per-
 sistent, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or

KNOWLEDGE OF OUR HEARTS,
 the present hour, nor the terror of ap-
 proaching evil, can shake the constancy of

A N D
 him, who confides in this cheering, this il-
 luminous declaration: It is your Father's

OUR PROFICIENCY IN THE FAITH.

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ON THE

2 CORINTHIANS XIII. 2.

KNOWLEDGE OF OUR HEARTS

FAITH: PROVE YOUR OWN FAITH.

A. D.

SERMON

XIII.

THEY who embrace the faith of
Christ are well assured, that they
OUR PROPOSITION IN THE FAITH.
in never obtain the inheritance which he
committed to his followers, without much
various tribulation, earnest abstinence, and
self-denial. Even He, the great foun-
der of their religion, bewailed himself, and
was obedient unto death, even the death of
shame. His apostles passed through the

S E R M O N XIII.

2 CORINTHIANS xiii. 5.

*Examine yourselves whether ye be in the
faith; prove your own selves.*

THEY who embrace the faith of
CHRIST are well assured, that they
can never obtain the inheritance which he
promised to his followers, without much
previous tribulation, earnest assiduity, and
strict self-denial. Even He, the great foun-
der of their religion, *humbled himself, and
became obedient unto death, even the death of
the cross* *. His apostles passed through the

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* Phil. ii. 8.

same

SERM. same fiery trial; in labours abundant, in
 XIII. stripes above measure, in prisons frequent, in
 deaths oft; in weariness, in painfulness, in
 watchings, in hunger and thirst, in cold and
 nakedness*. And although the disciples
 of Jesus, in these days of peace and pro-
 sperity, are not called upon to undergo the
 sufferings of the primitive martyrs, yet
 they are all required to *take up the cross*
 and follow their Master, by crucifying *the*
flesh, with the affections and lusts †.

No rule was ever prescribed more neces-
 sary towards the accomplishment of this
 arduous task, than the above injunction of
 St. Paul. If we mean to *walk as persons*
professing godliness, it is surely indispensibly
 requisite that we should *prove our own-*
selves; that we should look into our own
 bosoms, and see how far our lives are con-
 formable to the laws of our holy calling.

* 2 Cor. xi. 23. 27.

† Gal. v. 24.

Man is a free, rational agent, amenable, for his actions, to the Being who made him; and since no less than everlasting happiness or misery will depend upon the account he shall render, he cannot surely be employed in any business of such moment, as that of communing with his own heart, and ascertaining what he may hope or fear. We know that we are by nature inclined to ill, we know that we have *come short of the glory of God*, and that, *in many things*, all have offended; but till we minutely scrutinize into our conduct, we can only lament the sinfulness of mankind in general, without correcting our particular frailties. From others we seldom obtain any material information: A friend will rarely venture to remind you even of the most trivial misconduct, or the smallest failing: An enemy will probably disclose your follies and errors, but his accusation you will consider as the effect only of malevolence. The minister, whose province it is

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to

SERM. to reprove the vicious, can be acquainted
XIII. with little, except in very retired situations, of the dispositions of those who hear him. We cannot now expect that a prophet will arise to warn, and to reclaim, and shew, as in a glass, our imperfections and crimes. Each individual must hold up to himself the mirror of reflection, and learn the bias of his own mind by an impartial review of his past life: Conscience will then supply the office of the prophet, will accuse and judge, acquit and condemn.

Yet, necessary as it is, the examination of our conduct is seldom undertaken, and the knowledge of our hearts is faintly studied. To penetrate into the thoughts and tempers of others, hath been even considered as a science, and cultivated with laborious application; peculiar lines and characters of feature have been traced with minute exactness, and rules have been laid down to discover, by the exterior appear-

ance, what is passing in the recesses of the soul. But on themselves men are ever unwilling to turn the eye of inquiry, lest something should be observed seated within, to cover them with shame, and to sour their enjoyments. Yet if we neglect this important duty from the apprehension of disquietude, do we not act as absurdly as the wounded man who refuses the assistance of a surgeon, because the operation may give him pain.—We are besides so absorbed by our attention to the cares and pursuits of the world, that we find as little leisure as inclination to weigh ourselves in the balance: Thus through folly, indolence, or vice, the greater part of mankind remain deplorably ignorant of themselves.

If Nebuchadnezzar had searched into his own breast, he would never have exclaimed, with that pride which ignorance alone could dictate, *Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by*

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the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty? He was insensible of the dependent state of man, he was insensible of his own weakness and folly, and therefore a voice from heaven pronounced this awful sentence: O king Nebuchadnezzar, to thee it is spoken; the kingdom is departed from thee; and they shall drive thee from men, and thy dwelling shall be with the beasts of the field.*—The apostles were not conscious that they were influenced by unworthy principles, when, in the warmth of inconsiderate zeal, they called upon their Master to command fire from heaven upon those cities which rejected his doctrine; but he answered them with this pointed reproof: *Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of†.*

Without the strictest vigilance, our own hearts, even though we are inclined to

* Dan. iv. 32.

† Luke ix. 55.

prove

prove them, perpetually deceive us; our actions, indeed, we remember, but the motives that determined those actions, often lurk in secret, and we scarcely distinguish by what we have been swayed.—The miser, when he denies himself the comforts which court his acceptance, mistakes his avarice for prudence, and knows not that his soul is wholly engrossed by the sordid madness of age. The proud man, when he spurns the poor from his presence, and turns, with averted eye, from mean extraction and inferior station, imagines that such is the suitable demeanour of conscious dignity, and perceives not that he is entirely governed by the haughtiness of a low and illiberal spirit. The revengeful, while he pursues the man he hates from place to place, often believes himself to be actuated by a *proper* resentment, though in truth, he is only impelled by the most bitter malevolence. The majority, in like manner, seldom discover the chief

SERM. spring which directs their conduct; of
XIII. others they often form a correct judgment, but scarcely ever of themselves.

If then it be true that very few are sensible of what passes in their own bosoms, or trace their prevailing propensities and passions to their source, it will readily be granted that still fewer *examine whether they be in the faith*. The number of those is very inconsiderable who duly reflect upon their baptismal vow, by which they engaged constantly to believe God's holy word, and obediently to keep his commandments; yet, on their performance of this covenant they can alone rely for eternal life and glory.

It is time, therefore, for every one professing himself a Christian, and claiming the promises of redemption, to ascertain his proficiency in religion. That this great work may be performed, he must first determine

termine what is a true and necessary belief. To enter upon all the articles of Christianity, were far too copious a subject; suffice it to consider, and that briefly, those which are most evident and essential.

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The Gospel is the only rule of faith; and the faith which that prescribes is a firm belief in God, a constant reliance upon his providence, and an immoveable confidence in his promises; an unlimited assent to all the precepts and doctrines of his SON, and a sure trust in the grace of the HOLY SPIRIT.

To believe in God is not merely to acknowledge his existence; a true faith includes his wisdom, his power, his justice, and, in short, all his moral perfections. Have we this true faith? We doubt not, indeed, that there is a God, and that he is wise and good; but are we ever sensible that, as all his laws were dictated by wis-

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dom and goodness, they are the fittest and best adapted to our interest of any thing that could possibly be devised? Do we ever repine at what appears a hard and unreasonable sacrifice, and imagine that we are tempted above what we are able to resist? Do we ever think him slow to hear, or tardy to relieve? Do we ever wish his decrees reversed, or his dictates abolished? If we entertain any of these doubts or desires, we believe not in God; at least we believe not his attributes; for if all his laws were dictated by wisdom and goodness, how can the propriety of any thing proceeding from Him, however difficult or obscure it may appear to us, be for a moment questioned? How can it be supposed that, had we been left to act for ourselves, we could have framed a rule of life more pleasant and profitable, than that which He hath established? If God be just, how can we think any sacrifice unreasonable which he demands, or any temptation irresistible which

which he requires us to subdue? An arbitrary tyrant, indeed, may exact impossibilities, but an equitable governor will expect no more from his subjects than they are well able to perform. If God be just, how can he be slow to hear? The unrighteous judge is only to be moved by wearying him with repeated application, or by melting him with bribes; but the upright, even among men, attends to the cry of those who call upon him, and deals out justice to the oppressed without any recompense. If God be bounteous and compassionate, how can He be negligent to relieve? The priest and the levite may pass by without regarding the wounded traveller, but there will sometimes be found a pitying stranger to pour oil into his wounds; and shall we suppose that the ALL-MERCIFUL is less attentive to the afflicted than man? If God be righteous and holy, how can we wish his decrees reversed? Of the statutes of human institu-

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tion, formed in error and warped by prejudice, we may impatiently desire the repeal; they may establish injustice, and arm with authority the hand of oppression; they may spare the wide possessions of the wealthy, while they grind to nothing the little substance of the poor; they may infringe the natural rights of individuals, and strike at the welfare of a community; but the statutes of Him who is holy, just, and true, can only tend to establish holiness, justice, and truth. In short, whatever may be our desires, whatever may be our reasonings, it is part of our faith to be convinced, that, since every thing which exists, exists by the power of God, and every thing that we perceive in the moral, as well as in the natural world, is caused or permitted by Him, every thing is exactly as it *should* be. If at any time we do not believe this, we, in effect, do not believe in God.

A con-

A constant reliance upon his providence seems to be the certain effect of this rational belief; yet many good men were undetermined in their opinions concerning the particular interference of Heaven, till the Gospel put this beyond all dispute; for it might be argued, that the ALMIGHTY, having placed mankind in a world where every thing abounded for their comfort and nourishment, and having endowed them with reason, which, if properly attended to, would make them happy, had left them to their own guidance, and no longer regarded the affairs of human life, except on some peculiar and great occasions. Such an opinion might be strengthened by reflecting on the immeasurable distance between the Creator and the created, the greatness of God, the insignificancy of man, and the folly and littleness of his words and works *all the days of his vain life, which he spendeth as a shadow.*

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shadow *. To this might be added the observation, that there is no visible interference, all things appearing as if left to the course of nature, and the consequence of certain laws and properties, fixed and given to matter at the beginning. What was thus obscure to the eye of Reason, is clear to the eye of Faith; since the SON of the HIGHEST declared, that even the most common and inconsiderable birds, which were of so little worth, that they were sold for the smallest piece of coin, fell not to the ground but with the knowledge and permission of Him who made them. If then He thus regards the fowls of the air, shall he not much more watch over the sons of those, whom He formed after his own image, and destined for immortality? Have we an entire reliance upon this his providence? Do we not confide too much on our own strength, or in our own prudence? Do we not, in our

* Eccles. vi. 12.

afflictions,

afflictions, look to men, rather than to God, for support, and depend more on the protection of the wealthy, than on the ROCK OF AGES? Do we not sometimes exclaim, with the presumption of ignorance, *to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain* *?—If we thus rely upon the vigour of our own arm, and the wisdom of our own councils, if we call upon *man that shall die, and the son of man that withereth as the grass*, if we seek not the aid of Heaven in all our undertakings, we cannot be said to put our trust in God.

The promises made by the Gospel, are immortality and unending felicity, to those who believe and obey. That we shall live hereafter we are therefore incontestably convinced; but from such a conviction, there are certain consequences naturally resulting, for which, perhaps, we may search

* James iv. 13.

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in vain. An eternity of happiness is so infinitely beyond any thing we could hope for; unmingled joy is so unspeakably beyond any thing that we can experience here, even though all the pleasures of all the senses could be felt at once, that such a prospect must surely bear down every opposition, and induce a rational creature to sacrifice all earthly delights, that he may obtain so great and glorious a blessing. Have these promises such an effect upon us? Do we set *the inheritance of the saints* always before our eyes, and make it an anchor of the soul in every distress? Do we renounce all *the hidden things of dishonesty*, the pomp of ambition, and the hoards of avarice, and *seek above all things the kingdom of God and his righteousness*? If we do this, we can answer, we firmly believe; but if this world hath more hold upon our hearts than the hopes of futurity, we cannot truly say, that we have an immoveable confidence in the promises of God.

Having

Having thus reviewed our faith in the FATHER, we are next to examine our absolute dependance upon the SON, and our trust in the HOLY SPIRIT.

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When many, offended at the doctrine of CHRIST, withdrew themselves from the number of his disciples, He thus addressed his chosen apostles: *Will ye also go away?* But Peter replied, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.* He was thoroughly convinced that they could repair to no other guide, and that no means remained of obtaining salvation, but by attending to the words which the MESSIAH delivered. On natural religion we cannot depend, for we have transgressed the rules it prescribed. To the Jewish institution we cannot fly, for *the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect.*

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feet *. But what natural religion could not discover, the Gospel hath displayed, and *what the law could not do, in that it went through the flesh*, the Gospel hath performed; God having sent his Son in the likeness of man, and *for sin, condemned sin in the flesh* †, that the righteousness of the law, and the precepts of natural religion, might be fulfilled in all who confide in JESUS.—To us, and to all who believe and obey, there is a Saviour which is CHRIST the Lord; and to depend on any other, is to lean upon the broken reed, and, like the rebellious house of Israel, to hold a covenant with death, to make lies our refuge, and to hide ourselves under falsehood.

Every Christian must depart from iniquity: but lest his feeble efforts should prove ineffectual, he is animated by the Comforter from above. The SPIRIT, proceed-

* Heb. x. i.

† Rom. viii. 3.

ing from the FATHER and the SON, sanctifies our corrupt nature, and disposes us both *to will and to do*. To faith, he gives firmness; to piety, ardour; to every virtue, strength and efficacy. He sustains the weak, confirms the wavering, enlightens the ignorant, and perfects the good. He supports us under all the perils of our Christian race, and gives us vigour to reach the goal and obtain the incorruptible prize. In what manner the Holy Ghost operates, or how our souls are cleansed by his inspiration, we know not; but this we know, that *they who ask his aid shall receive, they who seek, shall find Him*.

Thus are we assisted by an invisible Power; but we are only assisted: the ALMIGHTY does not compel men to be virtuous, and draw them from evil without any struggle of their own; He does not perform all, and leave his creatures to do nothing; we, on our part, must strive

SERM. against sin, and make use of every means
 XIII. which reason or religion can prescribe, to
 { put off the old man with his deeds *.

Against a faith like this, which directly tends to make us virtuous and happy, who can possibly object?—Yet objections have been made.—A crucified REDEEMER, to some modern cavillers, as well as formerly to the Jews and Greeks, hath been a *stumbling block, and foolishness*. Yet they who now oppose us, are free from the peculiar prejudices of Israel; they have no superstitious reverence for external rites, nor any blind veneration for a prior institution: like the ancient heathen, therefore, they must be puffed up with the vanity of false philosophy, and think to explore the works of OMNISCIENCE by the faint ray of a glimmering taper. Is it the part of a wise man to deny all that he cannot compre-

* Col. iii. 9.

hend?

hend? Shall we say that any doctrine is not agreeable to the attributes of the Deity, because we cannot discover what the angels in vain *desire to look into*? As well might a child attempt to reason upon the laws and government of a mighty empire, as man to account for the purposes of Heaven. Shall we, who can scarcely boast sufficient discernment to investigate the plainest effects of nature, shall we pretend to inspect the secret springs that guide the universe, and decide concerning what is fit or unfit for the ALMIGHTY to accomplish? With the same presumption we might think to raise an edifice to heaven, and force a passage into the realms of spirits.

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But those parts of the New Testament which are *hard to be understood*, are not the great rocks of offence at which so many stumble and fall. The world in general would be well contented to *believe*, were

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nothing

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nothing else required; but they cannot submit to that renovation of heart, and that strict integrity of life, which must be the consequent fruits of their faith.—Were it only written on the banners of Christianity, *There is now no condemnation to them that are in CHRIST JESUS*, all would eagerly flock to her standard; but the apostle hath been careful to add, *who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit* *. This is what the adversary cannot endure. He tells you, perhaps, that his reason will not let him embrace the religion of JESUS; but look narrowly into his bosom, and you will commonly see that his ambition, his avarice, his sensuality, put themselves in battle array against the law that would destroy them; like the legion of devils, they have taken possession of the body, and will not suffer the holy One to enter. Were the ministers of the Gospel to hold this lan-

* Rom. viii. 1.

guage,

guage, "Come unto me, ye that riot in
"licentiousness, and know, that as the SA-
"VIOUR died for your sins, and was raised
"for your justification, you may still con-
"tinue in your iniquities; for to you no
"sin will be imputed, even though you re-
"main the slaves of vice;" were these our
tenets, doubtless the temples of God would
be crowded with believers, and all would
press to be received within the pale of that
church which made such bold and ample
promises. But we dare not flatter those
with any hope who are *conformed to this*
world, and, while they affect to *put on the*
LORD JESUS CHRIST, still persist in mak-
ing *provision for the flesh*.

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Every prejudice that impedes the recep-
tion of Revelation, originates in the de-
pravity of our nature, the pride of fancied
knowledge, and the mental darkness which
now surrounds us. To those, however,
who, with a conscience void of offence,

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advance towards that Sun of Righteousness which illuminates the world, CHRIST will be found *the power of GOD and the wisdom of GOD*; and while the proud and the contentious, *through* their boasted *wisdom*, know not the ALMIGHTY, and reject his dispensation, they who believe, by what their enemies may call *the foolishness of preaching*, shall lay hold on the promises of JESUS, *who of GOD is made unto us wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption* *.

The law which we endeavour to propagate, comes not recommended by the arts and embellishments of man; it is not supported, like the precepts of philosophy, merely by its native worth and beauty; it is not prescribed by the legislature, for the better regulation of government; it is not built upon the authority of synods and

* 1 Cor. i. 30.

councils,

councils, nor ordained by the church of England or the church of Rome; but enjoined by a Power which none can dispute:—From the Fountain of knowledge and goodness it proceeds, by the Lord of heaven and earth it is commanded; *he, therefore, that despiseth, despiseth not man, but GOD* *.

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Since such at least are its pretensions, shall any of us neglect to try the evidences of the Gospel? and if we are convinced that its origin is divine, shall we a moment delay to examine whether we are guided by this unerring rule?—We cannot surely disbelieve; we dare not surely disobey.

Know ye, then, your own selves? Are ye masters of your own hearts, and perceive ye that JESUS CHRIST is in you, except ye

* I Theff. iv. 8.

SERM. *be reprobates?* Are ye ready to receive the
XIII. words of truth, and eager to obey the call
of grace? Happy is the man who can
justly declare that he is a Christian in *deed*,
as well as in *name*.—Let no one be dis-
couraged by the uneasiness he may feel
upon self-examination, nor desist through
fluggish indolence, or hopeless desponden-
cy: Though the heart be found corrupt
and sensual, the grace of God can pervade
and cleanse it from all impurity; the Spi-
rit of Holiness can change this whitened
sepulchre, full of all uncleanness, into a
pure temple, enlightened with celestial
glory.

ON THE
DEATH OF THE PIOUS.

SERMON XIV.

Preached on the Death of a Friend

ON THE

DEATH OF THE REV. J. S. HUNTER

I heard a voice from Heaven, saying unto me,
Blessed are the dead which die in
the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the
Spirit, that they may rest from their
labours: and their works do follow them.

AMIDST the numerous calamities
of human life, nothing can afford
so much consolation as the bright expecta-
tion of a better life. While the present

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Preached on the DEATH of a FRIEND.

REVELATIONS xiv. 13.

*I heard a voice from Heaven, saying unto me,
Write, Blessed are the dead which die in
the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the
spirit, that they may rest from their la-
bours; and their works do follow them.*

AMIDST the numerous calamities
of human life, nothing can afford
substantial repose, but the bright expecta-
tion of immortality. While the prospect
is

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SERM. is gay and unclouded, and all that we be-
XIV. hold combines to soothe and delight the
mind, we seek no other satisfaction but
what results from the objects immediately
before us, nor think of the gloom which
may soon involve the skies, and change the
present lively scene into cheerless melan-
choly. But when every thing we see tends
only to remind us of sorrow, when all is
dark and dreary, and the world hath lost
its attractions, we naturally turn to some-
thing beyond the world, and fly for sup-
port and consolation to the asylum of Re-
ligion. Nor to her do we fly in vain. In
the hour of terror, Religion administers
courage; in the day of distress, she gives
relief; in the time of persecution, she
arms with patience; and at the moment of
dissolution, inspires with hope. In the
ear of the dying, she breathes this joyful
declaration, *Blessed are the dead which die
in the Lord!*

This chapter of the Apocalypse affords a striking and sublime representation of the glory which attends the true disciples of CHRIST, and the punishments inflicted upon those who *worship the beast and his image*.—While the evangelist *was in the spirit*, and beheld his REDEEMER standing upon Mount Sion, accompanied by the saints who had *his Father's name written on their foreheads*, a voice was heard, *as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder*, and the sound of harpers tuning their harps; and they sung, *as it were, a new song before the throne; and no man could learn that song, but they which were redeemed from the earth*. These glorified beings were the spirits of men who had never yielded to the dominion of sin, but followed the commandments of their Prophet and Saviour. *In their mouth was found no guile, for they are without fault before the throne of God*. For such as
these

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these is that mansion reserved, which no mortal eye can ever explore; to such as these are the titles given of *called, and chosen, and faithful*; whose life is pure, whose death is tranquil, and whose resurrection is glorious. But, unhappily, there are some who must *drink of that wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out, without mixture, into the cup of his indignation*; whose life is guiltiness, whose death is terror, and whose resurrection is a resurrection to misery.

It hath been demanded by those who wish to penetrate into the great schemes of Providence, wherefore it comes to pass that so little distinction is made between the undeserving and the meritorious, and why the ungodly should sometimes flourish, while the pious sink in obscurity, or pine in sorrow. *Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea are mighty in power? Their houses are*
safe

safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them *.—But the time of their prosperity and exultation is short; for though they riot in the profusion of luxury, and give law to a train of dependents, though the multitude bows in reverence as they pass, and the song of festivity re-echoes from their dwellings, yet *in a moment they go down to the grave* †. Like the fleeting exhalations of the night, they blaze for a season, and then are lost in darkness; while the holy man, though he lies down in the same dust with the profane and the sensual, and leaves his body, like them, a prey to corruption, awakes not, like them, to the voice of condemnation, but rises to behold and to be happy with his God.

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We dare make the appeal to any one, young or old, wise or unlearned, whether he can doubt this awful truth, that after

† Job xxi. 9.

* Ibid. xxi. 13.

death

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death cometh the judgment.—Reason tells us that iniquity merits punishment; reason tells us that God is just. We see, indeed, that *sentence against the wicked is not executed speedily*; but can we think that the hour of trial will not, at last, arrive? We see, perhaps, a virtuous individual struggling with difficulty, depressed by the insolence of pride, or crushed by the weight of power; and do we not believe that his sufferings will be recompensed, and his piety crowned with long felicity? If Reason were silent, Revelation hath left us no room to hesitate. We all have heard that *voice from Heaven*, which proclaimed confusion and wo to the disobedient, peace and joy to the righteous.

In death the Christian *rests from his labours*.—He hath no longer to contend with the world; to resist the seductions of pleasure, and subdue the cravings of ambition; to arm against the machinations of Satan,
and

and the treachery and injustice of man. SERM.
The shield of faith he needs no more; the XIV.
sword of the Spirit hath performed its
work; his warfare is concluded, and victory is obtained. Life, without a reference to futurity, will ever continue to be painful and oppressive. Much toil and anxiety does the best man undergo while he passes from infancy to old age. In youth, perhaps, he is disappointed in his earliest expectations; deceived in his friendships by too open and unsuspecting a temper; ridiculed by the vicious, and betrayed by the hypocritical; labouring through the period of manhood to procure a scanty provision, and daily observing the cruel, the avaricious, and the selfish, raising themselves to eminence, while he remains unnoticed and unknown. To a variety of ill we all are liable; to the arrows of pestilence, and the stroke of accident; to the snares of fraud, and the sting of unkindness: Some lingering distemper may prey
upon

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upon the body, banish
and joy from the heart.
misfortune may involve
sume our substance, and
ry:—For precarious is
all earthly possessions
berless are the avenues
The connections we
happiness, will sometimes
of disquietude and grief
we have too hastily con-
associates, may be un-
contentious; we may
rily, in domestick busi-
may be rendered dis-
Children, the greatest
years, when they are
posed, may be obstinate
bring the grey hairs
sorrow to the grave.—
nary cares, from public
from the anguish of
the pangs of disease,

body, banish sleep from the eyes, from the heart; some unexpected may involve us in trouble, contribute, and reduce us to penury; precarious is the tenure on which possessions are held, and number the avenues that lead to ruin. Afflictions we form for our ease and will sometimes prove the sources of trouble and grief. Those whom we too hastily chosen for our nearest may be untractable, gloomy, or sullen; we may be involved, unwelcome domestic broils, and our home rendered disgusting and wearisome. Even the greatest comfort to declining age when they are docile and well-disposed may be obstinate and vicious, and the grey hairs of the parent wither in the grave.—From these sublimities, from publick and private evil, from anguish of disappointed hope, from disease, the calamities of poverty,

verty, and all the numberless vexations of the world, the child of affliction is released by death. Death at once breaks every yoke, and frees us from every burden. The spirit of man, while confined in the body, is as the bird imprisoned in the net of the fowler; death loosens the cords, and the joyful captive escapes to his native skies.

In the tomb *the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary be at rest**; in that abode of insensibility we escape persecution, and cease to be perplexed with our vain labours; but something better than mere cessation from fatigue, or exemption from peril, awaits those *who die in the Lord*, for *when the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised, their works follow them*. Before the great tribunal of OMNISCIENCE, the good deeds of the faithful shall plead

* Job iii. 17.

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 XIV. EST shall accept and

Of the great day
 solemn description ha
 evangelist, to whom
 sions the mysteries o
 dead, small and grea
 and the books were ope
 was opened, which is th
 dead were judged out
 were written in the
 gave up the dead whic
 and hell delivered up t
 them : and they were
 cording to their wor
 thy bread upon the w
 lost ? Behold, now i
 which it is found
 Hast thou distributed
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the Death of the Pious.

, and the mercy of the HIGH-
accept and reward them.
great day of retribution this
cription hath been given by that
to whom were revealed in vi-
mysteries of Heaven: *I saw the*
l and great, stand before God,
books were opened: and another book
, which is the book of life: and the
judged out of those things which
ten in the books.—And the sea
e dead which were in it; and death
livered up the dead which were in
d they were judged, every man, ac-
their works.* Hast thou cast
upon the waters, and thought it
hold, now is the time arrived, in
is found with large increase.
distributed to the wants of the
is? hast thou protected the help-

* Rev. xx. 12, 13.

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less, sustained the weak, raised the hum-
ble? The hour is come, when all thy good
works shall be acknowledged. Hast thou
patiently endured the oppression of the
great? hast thou laboured in thy vocation
with diligence and cheerfulness? hast thou
studied to promote the welfare of those
with whom thou hast been connected?
hast thou been thankful to thy unseen be-
nefactor for all thou hast enjoyed, and de-
spised not his chastisement when trouble
hath assailed thee? If thou canst answer
well, blessed art thou, *faithful servant!*
blessed above thy conception; for behold
the *holy city* descending from Heaven to re-
ceive the just, and *prepared as a bride adorn-*
ed for her husband; and hear the voice of
OMNIPOTENCE declaring that *He will dwell*
with them, and they shall be his people; that
He will *wipe all tears from their eyes*, and ba-
nish *sorrow, pain, and death*, from their dwel-
lings. *He that overcometh shall inherit all*
things; I will be his God, and he shall be

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my son *. What heart can remain unaffected at the prospect of a change like this? From perpetual toil to constant repose, from frequent misery to unceasing joy, from the cave of darkness to the presence of the ALMIGHTY!—Well, then, might the Spirit pronounce those blessed who die in the faith of JESUS, and in obedience to his laws, since thus they rest from all their labours, and their works follow them to the throne of GOD.

Since such are the promises of an immutable CREATOR, shall any one be found so hardy as to affirm that there is no resurrection of the dead? Shall any individual now declare, like the misguided Sadducee of old, that there is no future recompense to stimulate our diligence in holiness, and that man and beast have one common end? Where such a suspicion can be entertained,

* Rev. xxi. 7.

virtue,

virtue, and peace, and comfort, are no more.—But our faith is too well grounded to permit the shadow of a doubt; our confidence in the witnesses, who followed their Master through danger, persecution, and death, is too firm to be shaken by the crafty arts of those who *dig the pit for our souls*. Upon us the subtle insinuations of every enemy can have no power; we know that as surely as *by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead* *.

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Yet some objector may arise, as in the days of the apostle, and demand, How is this resurrection performed? *How are the dead raised up, and with what body do they come* †? To which we answer, they are raised by that supreme POWER, who formed them in the beginning; and surely he who could create, with the same ease can restore: They will come with that body

* I Cor. xv. 21. † Ibid. xv. 35.

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which it shall please their Maker to bestow; not, indeed, with that corruptible flesh we now inhabit, for *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption* *. We are sufficiently convinced, that it will not resemble the material substance of an animal; but what it will resemble, we can never determine: Nor is it at all requisite that we should. *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body*: This may surely suffice us to know, without minutely and vainly enquiring concerning the particles of which it shall be composed. Upon this assurance we may securely rest, that, *as we have borne the image of the earthy, so shall we also bear the image of the heavenly*.

That we may *die in the Lord*, let us live according to his will; let us live as ra-

* 1 Cor. xv. 50.

tional beings, as true Christians, as candidates for a glorious immortality. Let us shew that we are sensible our life is but a vapour, not by the gloom of our countenance, or the dejection of our spirits, but by the steadiness of our virtue, and our contempt for the fleeting gratifications of the world. Let us shew that we are conscious our *works follow* us, not by loading the altar with the splendid offerings of superstition, or by the pointed display of ostentatious liberality, but by the sacrifice of a meek and quiet spirit, and the constant exertions of feeling benevolence. We want no additional incitement, we need no safer guide—Heaven is the mark to which we press forward; the Gospel is the light to conduct us on our way.

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From the book of salvation, therefore, learn the true wisdom: It is ever open to your search; consider it, be virtuous, and be happy. Try every action of your lives

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by the rules of that admirable, that perfect law. Expel from your hearts every inclination to forbidden pleasure; cultivate every thing that is generous and praise-worthy. So shall the grace of God support, and lead you to the grave in peace: loved by your brethren while you live, lamented when you depart, and crowned with felicity unspeakable when you are called from the tomb.

If, upon this occasion, any recent instance of piety and goodness should recur to your memory; if you have known among you one, who, in the station allotted him, performed the social duties of a man, and the sacred offices of a Christian, with alacrity and reverence, *be followers of him, as he was of CHRIST.* Review every part of his conduct which may redound to his honour and your improvement; and if some error or casual impropriety can be discovered, avoid it in your own practice,
but

but do not enviously display it to the sight of others. The most shining examples cannot be without defects; but where defects are so few, let them be as spots in the sun, which are wholly lost in the brightness of the luminary. Observe him with a mind enlightened by knowledge, yet not elated with the vanity of learning; endowed by nature with considerable abilities, which he had cultivated with laborious application, see him willingly submitting to the drudgery of common avocations, and mixing in friendly intercourse with those, whose employments and habits of life precluded them from intellectual attainments: Nor can this be esteemed a trivial commendation, since it hath been remarked by one of the best men, and the most sublime genius of the present age, that “a voluntary descent from the dignity of science is, perhaps, one of the hardest lessons humility can teach.”

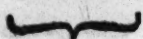
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But let not that part of his character be unnoticed which all may imitate, his purity of morals and warmth of piety.—Let those little circumstances be remembered that gave testimony to his domestick virtues ; and last of all, behold his more than philosophick patience, his Christian fortitude, during the repeated attacks of a slow, but fatal disease. That firm principle of religion, which made no stir or pretensions in the ordinary concerns of the world, which was not perpetually in his mouth, but rooted in his heart, that principle could make him cheerful in the hour of sickness and pain, and receive that stroke with placid resignation, from which mankind in general would fly with terrour. Can we consider the close of a life like this, without steadfastly resolving to live as he lived, that we may die as he died.

But let not that part of his character be unnoticed which all may admire, his purity of morals and warmth of piety—these little circumstances, he remembered that gave testimony to his domestic virtues; and last of all, he said no more than philosophick patience, his Christian fortitude, during the repeated attacks of a flow, but fatal disease, the principle of religion, which made no pretensions to the ordinary comforts of the world, which was not perpetually in the mouth, but rooted in his heart, that principle could make him cheerful in the hour of sickness and pain, and receive that shock with placid resignation, from which many kind in general would fly with terror. Can we consider the close of a life like this without feelings of religious joy? as we find that we are a little in debt.

DAY OF THE LORD.

347, 461

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JOEL ii. 1.

Blow ye the trumpet in Sion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain; let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand.

THE follies and vices of other men are so open to observation, that they are at once distinguished in their full magnitude, while our own are beheld as through a dim glass; they are faintly and imperfectly descried, if not totally hid from our sight. “Let me heal thee of thine
“infirmity,”

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“infirmity,” is perpetually the language of mankind to their brethren, though at the same time a disease as virulent preys upon him, who would undertake the cure of his neighbour.—When the covetous man hears the imprecations and impiety of the profane, he exclaims against the wickedness of the age, and, like the Pharisee, pretends to be thankful that *he* does not take the name of his God in vain ; yet at that very instant should a wretched object solicit his compassion, and ask a morsel of bread to satisfy the wants of nature, he repulses the suppliant with indignation, and complains that he is perpetually assailed with the clamour of poverty ; forgetting that the same God, who declared, by Moses, *He would not hold him guiltless that should take his name in vain*, said also, by his Son, *give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn thou not away* *.

* Matt. v. 42.

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When the extortioner beholds the drunkard impairing his fortune, his health, and his understanding, or sees the adulterer laying schemes to seduce and betray, he asks them if they have any sense of religion, and departs, in abhorrence of *their* crimes, to wring from the hands of the cottager the little he hath gained by tedious labour, or to pursue the debtor to the utmost extremity of the law, *and take the coat* from him that hath no other covering; not considering that the same Father of all, who commanded us to live *soberly and righteously*, hath assured us that he will *deliver to the tormentors* that hard and unfeeling creditor, who shall seize his fellow-servant by the throat, and rigorously exact *the uttermost farthing*.

With the same self-partiality do we often express our astonishment, that, after the many gracious calls of their JEHOVAH to repentance, after the prophets had so
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repeatedly cried out in their streets, represented in the liveliest colours the folly of their conduct, and threatened them with so many and such severe judgments, after all these incitements to amendment, we wonder that the Jews should remain insensible, and still merit the title, so often given them, of an obstinate and rebellious people. Yet if the question were put to us, whether we have not, like them, shut our ears to conviction, and disregarded the ordinances of God, what could we answer? We must surely confess that we have *sinned against the LORD*, though a greater than Moses hath given us a law of salvation; we must surely acknowledge, that we have not *been converted and healed*, though a greater than Isaiah hath *caused his glorious voice to be heard*. Too many of us, who bear the name of Christians, still continue resolutely impenitent, or indolently careless, though the MESSIAH himself hath called us unto holiness.

The

The prophet Joel was commissioned by the Disposer of Nations, to *blow the trumpet in Zion*, and proclaim to its inhabitants the destruction which they had brought upon their country by their vices and idolatry. A swarm of noxious insects, as a mighty army, was to devour the fruits of the earth, and convert their pleasant vales into a desolate wilderness. *Hear this ye old men, and give ear all ye inhabitants of the land, awake ye drunkards and weep, for a nation is come up, strong and without number.* Nor was this the only visitation with which they were menaced: Their inspired writers had foretold that war should go hand in hand with famine, and that their sons and their daughters should be wanderers and captives. Well, then, might the tribes of Israel be called upon to *tremble*, for the spirit of the Lord was departing from their race: That powerful arm which had led them through every peril, was about to direct the sword of their enemy, and that

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mighty

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mighty voice, which had inspired them with ardour, was now to spread an alarm through the *holy mountain*, and to fill them with confusion and dismay.

The prophets who spoke to the descendants of Abraham, speak likewise to us: Whether we are ever to apprehend such a temporal punishment as that which fell upon the Jewish nation, it were needless to determine, since the SON of GOD hath appeared to warn the wicked of a destruction more fatal, a wo more terrible.

Then surely it is necessary for every one to *cry aloud*, and *spare not*, to *lift up* his voice like a trumpet, to *shew* the people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin*,—that those who are vicious may fear and be reclaimed, that those who are heedless may attend and be earnest to work out

* Isaiah lviii. 1.

their

their salvation; and that those who have trimmed their lamps, and prepared for the reception of the bridegroom, may still watch, that when the Lord cometh and knocketh, they may open to him immediately*.

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By the peculiar impatience with which reproof is heard, it seems evident that of all things it is the most hateful to be reminded of our faults. Remonstrance, however it may be conveyed, is generally unwelcome; chiefly, perhaps, because it infers a degree of superiority in the monitor, to which the pride of human nature cannot willingly submit. But though some excuse could be allowed for our weakness, when a fellow creature steps forth to question and to chide us, yet we might surely hear with patience when our Maker condescends to reason with us, and submissively bow the

* Luke xii. 36.

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neck to that rod of correction, which is held out by the hand of the ALMIGHTY. The sick man thankfully receives the medicine, however nauseous, which his physician prescribes; and the wounded endures the most painful operation, if he is assured by the skilful that it is requisite for his recovery; but we throw aside with disgust, the medicine which is held out to us by the Physician of the soul, and shrink from the probe which would search the heart.

When Amos declared that the Lord would rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword, Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, and the creature of the king, accused the holy man of conspiring against his sovereign, and complained that *the land was not able to bear all his words*. *O thou seer*, said the corrupt priest, *go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread and prophesy there; but prophesy not again*

again any more at Bethel; for it is the king's chapel, and it is the king's court*. Yet Amos spake not upon his own authority: *I was no prophet*, he replied, *but an herdsman*; and the LORD said unto me, *Go, prophesy unto my people Israel*.—In the same manner is the instructor, who would remind us of our duty, repulsed by the proud and the ungodly; yet the saints and martyrs who have invited us to repentance, *preach not themselves, but CHRIST JESUS the LORD* †. It is not man who takes upon him to remonstrate with the sinner; it is not man who reaches out his hand to guide us from the error of our ways, and lead us into the pleasant paths of wisdom: It is not the creature, subject to the same passions and foibles with ourselves, who reproaches us with ingratitude and folly, but the ETERNAL and ALLMERCIFUL.—God speaks by the mouth of men. The Ruler

* Amos vii. 12, 13.

† 2 Cor. iv. 5.

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of the storm, the Governor of the heavens, calls to us by the voice of His prophets, and addresses Himself to the clay He animated, by the pen of His apostle: *For lo, He that formeth the mountains and createth the wind, declareth unto man what is His thought; that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the LORD, the GOD OF HOSTS, is his name* *. It is HE who hath a *controversy with His people*; it is HE who deigns to *plead with Israel*, it is HE who threatens in mercy, and proclaims the day of vengeance at hand, that we may turn and repent, and offend no more.

Yet can the unrighteous believe this? We shall at first, perhaps, be led to suspect, that they who transgress the law of holiness, cannot think that its origin is divine; we shall imagine that they who refuse to hearken, must esteem the sacred

* Amos iv. 13.

oracles as gross forgeries, which claim authority that was never conferred, and which promise rewards and threaten punishments for actions that are alike indifferent to the Lord of creation. For who would dare to condemn the precepts of the best and greatest of Beings, and incur the displeasure of HIM, at whose presence *the hills melt like wax*, and the frame of nature is convulsed? of HIM, who reads every secret thought which casually arises in the mind, as plainly as though it were engraved on monuments of brass, and whose power to destroy is irresistible as *the pestilence that walketh in darkness*?—Observe the offender whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness, who is perpetually blaspheming the name in which he was baptized, and profaning the ordinances of HIM by whom he lives; can he believe that God thus spake by the mouth of Moses, *Ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane*

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*the name of thy God *?—*Regard the man who is lying in wait for his adversary, eager to revenge an insult which was given in the heat of anger, or in the opposition of jarring interests; who hath treasured up the hope of vengeance, as a miser his store, and fed his malice, like the unrelenting savage, with the expectation of shedding blood; can he believe that *with the same measure he metes it shall be measured to him again*, and that *he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy †?* Mark him who hath given a free rein to his vices, and made, as it were, a covenant with impurity; his appetites are to him as a law which must be invariably obeyed; he breaks through the obligations of society, and destroys the peace of individuals, rather than lose *his share of voluptuousness*. He saith in his heart, *stolen waters are*

* Levit. xix. 12.

† James ii. 13.

sweet,

sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant *; and he lurks about in the twilight like a robber, that he may enter unseen into the house of the adultress. He surely knoweth not that there is an eye to observe, though all mankind should sleep; he surely cannot believe that the voice of inspiration hath declared, *they who walk after the flesh, in the lust of uncleanness, shall utterly perish in their own corruption* †. In short, wherever we survey depravity, we shall still be inclined to suppose, that the writings of the prophets and apostles are considered as fables, and the idea of a day of judgment, as the dream of folly, or the invention of fraud.

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And yet, notwithstanding infatuated mortals appear unbelievers by their actions, you will find, upon more diligent inquiry, that a very inconsiderable number

* Prov. ix. 17.

† 2 Peter ii. 12.

are

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are really what they seem. So powerful, so incontrovertible are the evidences of religion, that even among the most sensual and debauched, you will perceive but few who are infidels at heart. While they feel the vigour of health, and no prospect of immediate danger is before them, their belief may be said to slumber; but visit them with some sudden calamity, and their faith will revive; let them feel the terroure of approaching dissolution, and you will hear the tongue that never called upon the name of Jesus, except in horrid imprecations, acknowledging his authority, and imploring his mercy.—But I will make the appeal to the heart of every sinner, whether, in spite of all the cavils of the adversary, and the allurements of vice, in spite of every objection that can be urged against revelation, assisted by his love of pleasure, and his desire of being freed from the restraints of morality, whether he can ever erase from his mind the expectation of that day

of retribution, for which the Gospel warns him to prepare?—What a reproach then do they bring upon themselves by their negligence and folly, in acting so opposite to the precepts of their faith, as to make it appear that they have cast away the word of reconciliation, and abandoned themselves wholly to infidelity and atheism! What must be the consequence of such preposterous conduct? Our Lord will surely consider those as aliens and adversaries, who deny Him before men, by shewing that his commandments have no influence upon their lives. To refuse to obey, is to refuse to acknowledge Him.

It is said, and with great appearance of reason, that nothing but the remoteness of the rewards and punishments of another world, could prevent them from having that effect upon our conduct, which they so justly claim. Present pleasure smiles before us, and the joys of futurity are forgotten;

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gotten; immediate gain lies within our reach, and the treasures of heaven are unregarded. But shall we not remember that the delights of eternity never cloy, and that the riches of the kingdom of God *neither moth nor rust can corrupt*? Or if it should yet be said that still, though complete and unfading, they are *distant* objects of attention, let us ask, What is the period which must elapse before we can obtain them? Must thousands and thousands of years intervene; must millions of ages roll slowly away? On the contrary, *the kingdom of Heaven is at hand*.—Do we not know that the utmost extent of human existence is but a span? Do we not know that whatever may be our power, whatever may be our wealth, whatever our capacities and means of enjoyment, our bodies must speedily decay, and return to the dust from whence they came? Whether life be a scene of pleasure or pain, the curtain must soon drop, and the gay machinery at once vanish.

Darkness

Darkness and death are approaching, and death will be succeeded by judgment. SERM.
XV.

Then wo to them who now *put far away the evil day, and cause the seat of violence to come near; who lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and chant to the sound of the viol**.—If the wretch be sinking with confusion and affright, who stands, as a culprit, in the courts of justice, what must be the perturbation of *their* minds, who, fully sensible of their enormities, are summoned by the trumpet to answer at the tribunal of God? The mortal judge may be deceived, the evidence may be insufficient, and the law evaded; but who shall deceive HIM whose eye reads the soul? What shall evade the perfect law of holiness?—Nor power, nor art can erase from the book of life those evil deeds, which have been recorded by angels, and seen by God.

* Amos vi. 3, 4.

We

SERM.

XV.

We are soon alarmed at trivial evil, and swift to escape from temporal misery: Why should we be careless and secure only when we have most occasion to fear, and neglect to arm against that hour of terrour *when the sun and moon shall be dark, and the stars withdraw their shining* * ?—Then let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, while the apprehension of danger can urge them to repentance, and turn unto the Lord *with weeping* and prayer, ere to weep and to pray be too late.—When the angel hath *thrust in the sickle*, and the harvest of the earth is ripe, it will be vain to seek the REDEEMER; it will be vain to fly from the JUDGE, for *though they dig into hell thence shall mine hand take them; though they climb up to Heaven, thence will I bring them down* †.

Long since hath the Sun of righteousness arisen to be a light to the Gentiles, and the

* Joel ii. 10. † Amos ix. 2.

glory of Israel. A Messiah was foretold, a Messiah hath appeared; redemption was promised, redemption hath been accomplished. The Spirit hath descended from above to enlighten the hearts of his chosen people, and preach *the everlasting Gospel* to the inhabitants of the world. The name of JESUS hath been declared; we have been invited to repent, to be converted, and saved. If the expectation of reward be ineffectual, let the dread of punishment reclaim us, and let each individual consider himself as particularly addressed by that warning angel, who thus exclaimed in the midst of Heaven: *Fear GOD and give glory to Him, for the hour of his judgement is come* *.

SERM.

XV.

To the man who attentively regards the great doctrines of Christianity, who weighs the difference between the present and the

* Rev. xiv. 7.

future,

SERM.

XV.



future, and beholds, in the mirror of Hope, that glorious inheritance which is prepared for the faithful; to the man who truly and firmly believes, what are all the pleasures of sense, the glitter of wealth, or the distinctions of greatness? What is the vain toil and bustle of the world to him, who reflects on that day *when the Lord shall arise to shake terribly the earth*, and all the polished works of man, which the labour of uniting millions hath completed, shall be crushed in a moment? when cities and empires, lands and seas, shall rush confusedly together, and the vast theatre of nature pass away, as the meteor which sweeps through the air, and is seen no more? These are not the flights of fancy, or the dreams of enthusiasm; these are not the pictures of a poetical imagination, or the wild chimeras of a distempered brain: *The heavens shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat* *. **THE LORD**

* 2 Peter iii. 12.

JESUS

JESUS shall be revealed from heaven, with his mighty angels, in flaming fire*. This is the solemn declaration of that BEING, whose hands have formed, sustained, and will, at last, destroy the mighty mass: *Be wise now, therefore, O ye kings! be instructed, ye judges of the earth †!* Prepare, by a life of undissembled piety, for that awful period, when, at the voice of the ALMIGHTY, the graves shall yield up their dead, all nations and languages shall stand before his throne, the books be opened, and every one judged *according to his works*. Attend to the call of prophets and apostles, of saints and martyrs, of Him, who is *the way, the truth, and the life*, that hereafter ye may hear these joyful sounds: *Behold, the tabernacle of GOD is with men—and there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor pain, for the former things are passed away ‡.*

* 2 Thess. i. 7. † Psal. ii. 10. ‡ Rev. xxi. 4.

T H E E N D.

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